the weekly
Standard

DECEMBER 18, 1995 $2.95

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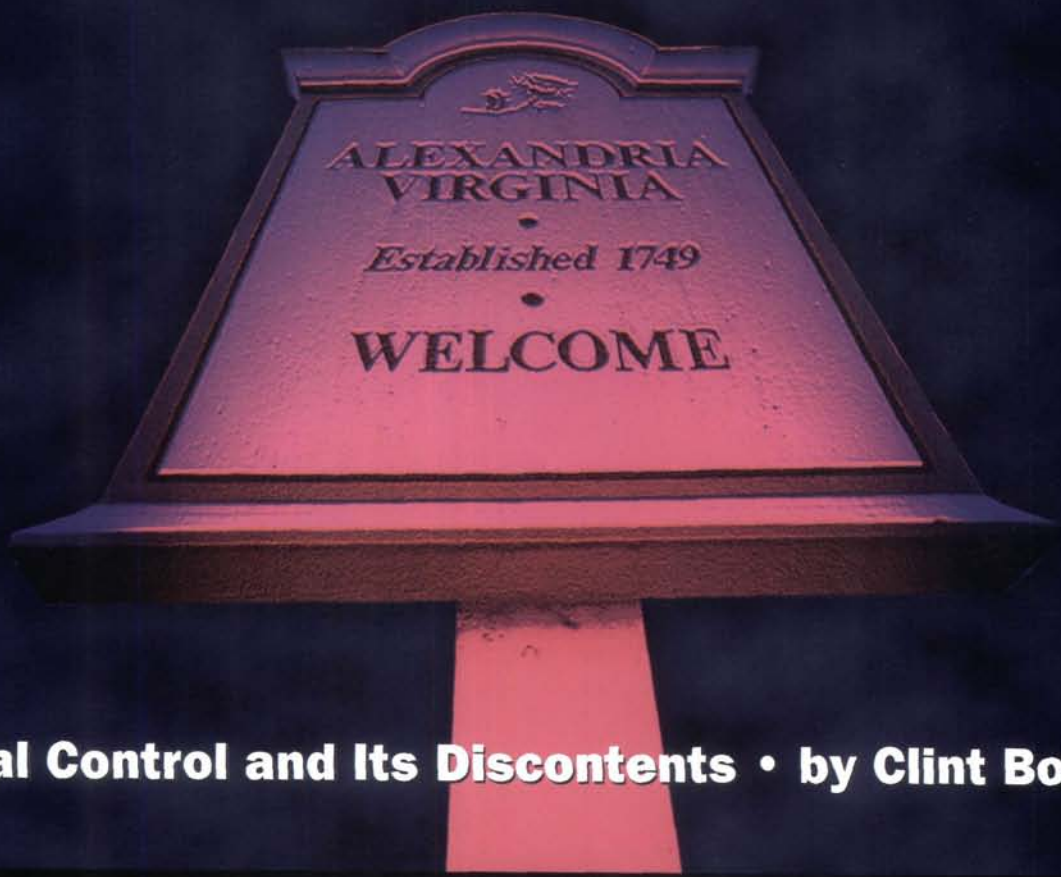

Local Control and Its Discontents • by Clint Bolick

A Farewell to 'Calvin and Hobbes'
JAMES Q. WILSON

In Defense of a 'Conservative Revol
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

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the weekly Standard

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly, except for two issues combined into one in August and December, by News America Publishing Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036. Application to mail at Second-class postage is pending at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Send subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153. Yearly subscriptions, $79.96; Canadian, $99.96; foreign postage extra. Cover price, $2.95 ($3.50 Canadian); double issues, $3.95 ($4.50 Canadian). Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Subscribers: Please send all remittances, address changes, and subscription inquiries to: THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Customer Service, P.O. Box 710, Radnor, PA 19088-0710. If possible include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-983-7600. Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is (202) 293-4900. Advertising Production: call Natalie Harwood, (610) 293-8540. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 930, Radnor, PA 19088-0930. Copyright 1995, News America Publishing Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Publishing Incorporated.

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The Dole-Gingrich Split (cont'd)

When John Boehner, the House Republican conference chief, informed a roomful of lobbyists of House speaker Newt Gingrich's plan to hang tough in budget talks with the White House, he was almost immediately contradicted by Senate GOP leader Bob Dole.

Gingrich wants to put maximum pressure on President Clinton by raising the prospect of another government shutdown. But Dole, operating off a different playbook, declared publicly there'd be no shutdown. Republicans would offer a continuing resolution to avert that. The relief at the White House was palpable. Until Gingrich got in trouble over controversial statements, an ethics investigation (he's been largely exonerated), and a Federal Election Commission suit, Dole deferred to his strategic advice. No more.

Meanwhile, Democrats continue to harass Gingrich and anyone associated with him, such as Ethics Committee chairman Nancy Johnson of Connecticut. Democratic leaders are trying to persuade Bill Curry, the centrist White House aide who lost the Connecticut governor's race in 1994, to challenge Johnson. He lost to her narrowly in 1982, but since then Johnson has won re-election handily.

Johnson is closely identified with Gingrich's plan to reform Medicare, a favorite Democratic target. Curry will decide by Christmas whether to run. Don't count on it, though. He really wants to run for governor again in 1998.

Shut Up in the Belly

In announcing his retirement, Sen. Alan Simpson said he no longer had "the old fire in the belly" for politics. The use of "fire in the belly" to describe political commitment has become a cliche more desperately in need of retirement than Simpson himself: A Nexis search reveals that the phrase has been used in a political context 955 times since 1976, to describe everyone from Harvard graduate students to Pat Schroeder and Paul Tsongas. Enough already.

Bill Clinton's Pathetic Misquotations

Proof positive that President Clinton isn't reading The Standard came on Dec. 6, when the president addressed a White House conference on HIV and AIDS. Just weeks before (in our November 13 issue), John J. Pitney, Jr. had scolded politicians who quote Alexis de Tocqueville as saying things Tocqueville never said. Pitney singled out the one about America's being a great country because it is a good country.

The president plowed on undeterred as he addressed the AIDS sufferers. "I ask all of you to remember this," he began. "This is fundamentally a good country. Alexis de Tocqueville said in the the 1830s that . . ."

The People Have a Conniption

The U.S. Department of Education ruled Nov. 30 that Chief Illiniwek can stay on as the University of Illinois's Native American mascot. Some were quick to claim a reversal for Indian-rights groups. Yeah, sure. Here's what's happened in the week since:

1) Heileman Brewery was banned from selling Crazy Horse beer in Minnesota when state public safety commissioner Michael Jordan ruled that the brand implies an association with the Indian leader.

2) The Chumash Indians of southern California, the *Washington Post* notes, are demanding that the town of Malibu require that oceanfront building sites get an inspection for Indian burial grounds (which can be carried out only by a certified Indian, at rates up to $46,000).

3) In Bailey, Colorado, two local whites (one claims a Chaddo Indian grandmother) are suing in U.S. district court after neighbors in the residential area objected to the pair's starting raging fires in the yard of their home in enactment of a "Lakota sweat lodge rite."

4) The Idaho Nez Percé, meanwhile, are beside themselves that the Spalding-Allen collection of Nez Percé artifacts—bought by an Ohio settler for $57 last century and currently in the custody of the Ohio Historical Association—has been assessed at $1 million. The regalia should be returned to the Clearwater River, according to the tribe's spokesman, Herman Reuben, and its ethnographer, Allen Slickpoo, Sr.

One solution is in sight: An amendment just passed the U.S. Senate that would allow unlimited boxing (presumably including no-holds-barred matches) on federal Indian reservations. If that passes, the Nez Percé will be able to buy their treasures back.

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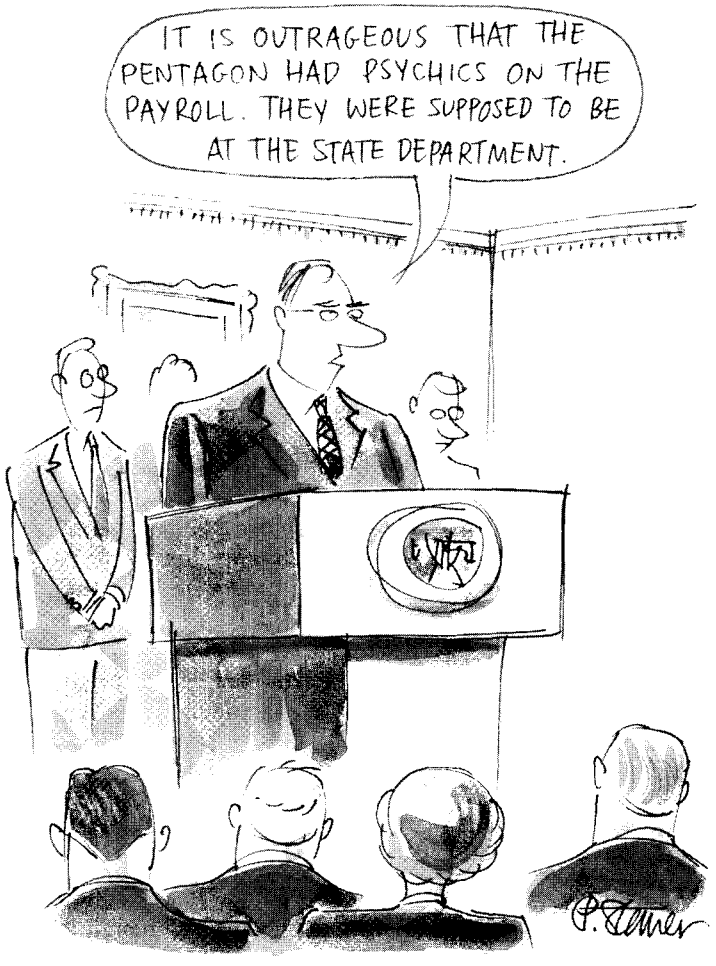
Scrapbook



Poetry Is Back!

Try to imagine how Norman Mailer must have pitched his latest poem to *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown: "Tina, I've been trying my hand at verse, and I feel I've touched on something quite profound . . . " In any case, here, in its entirety, is Mailer's poem, which was published in last week's "Talk of the Town" section:

Newt Gingrich looks for angry votes;
Ergo he hammers welfare folks.
There lie his presidential hopes:
Apotheosis of the Snopes.

Amazingly enough, Mailer's is not the worst poem inspired by the Newt Gingrich speakership. Allen Ginsberg's "On Political Skeletons," published last month in the *Nation*, retires that honor. Here is a stanza from that much longer work:

Said the Neo-Conservative skeleton
Homeless off the Street
Said the Free Market Skeleton
Use 'em up for meat.

At least the Republican revolution seems to be heralding a return to rhyme in the land of Free Verse.

Walter Duranty Lives!

It kind of jumps right off the page at you. There in the "Christmas Issue" of the *New York Review of Books*, leading the letters section, is a strongly worded complaint about a Robert Block essay on Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic. David Binder writes that Block has appropriated from his own past work, without citation, some basic biographical details on Mladic. And then this: "I strongly wish to dissociate myself from [Block's] assessment of the general as a crazed killer. Until compelling evidence to the contrary surfaces, I will continue to view Mladic as a superb professional."

General Mladic, for the record, is the subject of an International War Crimes Tribunal indictment for genocide. David Binder, for the record, is...well, the I.D. on his letter says it all: "*The New York Times*, Washington Bureau, Washington, D.C." Who says the *Times* can't any longer be depended on to employ unconventional men with unconventional views?

The Reading List

The Reading List must apologize for its sloppiness in recent issues. Literate readers have written in to call attention to some gaffes and blunders, all committed in the haste brought about by deadline pressure. Peter Hansen of Walpole, N.H., writes: "Fabrizio doesn't plot to assassinate anybody in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, least of all Napoleon, whom he worships." Somehow we got the plot crossed with *War and Peace;* forgive us. "As for *Black Mischief*, Emperor Seth is so far from being a cannibal that, like a particularly obtuse U.N. observer in Rwanda, he simply does not have eyes to see what is happening around him." Though it is, of course, true that in the last paragraph of the book, the hapless newspaperman Boot of the *Beast* is eaten right up.

For this week, then, the Reading List will stay mute, licking its wounds and preparing a really good Christmas list for you next week.

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Casual

Urban Village

Dudley was staring at my refrigerator. A neighbor, he had come by at the suggestion of a mutual friend to measure my small fireplace for a custom-made screen. As it turned out, my house had strong associations for him. He'd known the couple who bought it in the late 1950s and lived here until they died—she, just five years ago. Libby was beloved by many in these parts. She ran an antique store that covered the gamut from junk to genuine rarities, and she was legendary as a character and cook. The real estate agent who sold me the house last spring had known Libby, too, and said there were seldom fewer than 12 around the table at her rollicking dinners. I delight in her old Crown stove, with two ovens and two broilers and six gas burners.

But it was the undistinguished hulk of the refrigerator that had Dudley's attention, as we finished our turn through the house and came into the kitchen. "That was Libby's," he said. "We gave it to her. It was a present for her and Gibby's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, and all her friends chipped in."

I mention this pleasing moment not because it was remarkable but because, on the contrary, it typifies the village where I live. I live on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

I moved back here in May, after 13 years away, in the heartland first, then in the suburbs. When people ask me, amazed, why anyone voluntarily would trade the space and security and abundant bathrooms of a leafy Virginia development for the high taxes, creaky services, and crime of Marion Barry's Washington, D.C., my answer is ready: I came back for aesthetics and for community.

Age imparts harmonies to houses. In my neighborhood of tree-lined residential streets, Korean corner stores, small parks, and grand white marble monuments, the oldest dwellings have the poise that comes with two centuries' maturity; my own frame house dates from around the Civil War. More numerous are two- and three-story brick townhouses put up between the 1870s and the Depression. The small front gardens—some manicured, some overgrown—are rimmed with iron fences. You notice them, because here people walk.

Years ago, I walked these streets pushing a double stroller. I spent evenings in dozens of these houses, as a member of the Capitol Hill Babysitting Co-op (which is still going strong, with nearly 90 member families). The house where my mother died is here. So is the big corner house, scene of the world's best parties, with its tower and verandas and 19 rooms, where a friend presides, patriarchal at 72, over the block where he was born. Just a little further on—almost shouting distance from where I live—is the public school where my children learned to read, a handsome Victorian pile on Stanton Park.

Friends we made back then through a parent-run neighborhood day care group have never left. In the intervening years, the church where my godchildren—now in college—were baptized has acquired new overlays of meaning, from a funeral, a marriage, fine evenings of community theater, and innumerable Christmas pageants that saw my niece and nephews successively promoted from sheep to shepherd to member of the Holy Family.

But the quintessential local institution remains the Eastern Market. An old-fashioned food market in an 1870s building with crafts and country produce outside, it is bright in all seasons; there are daffodils in spring and pumpkins in the fall and faces year-round. Buying some apples the other morning from a woman in woolen gloves, I asked her whether it were possible I remembered her from 20 years ago. "Honey," she said, a smile lighting her face, "I've been coming here since 1948."

Always a Saturday gathering place, the market also provides first jobs for neighborhood teenagers, who help the farmers set up their stalls in the early morning. Across the street, Libby Sangster's Antiques on the Hill opens a little later; her daughter and son-in-law and grandchildren live above the store.

When I leave Libby's house for work every day, I go either of two ways.

If I go right and immediately right again, I drive down East Capitol Street toward the Capitol, looming just five blocks ahead. For me, no disillusionment has yet robbed the wedding-cake extravagance of that dome of all power to inspire.

If I go left, down Fifth Street, I'm heading straight for a graceful equestrian statue of Nathanael Greene, George Washington's favorite general. Needless to say, generations of neighborhood children have longed to climb up and ride behind the dashing young Greene, though no one I've asked can name any who succeeded.

Long ago, when the builders' hammers were first ringing at my little house, the country Greene helped found was only 80 years old. I like to think that he and his gallant friends would not feel altogether estranged if they could come back and visit my neighborhood in 1995.

Claudia Winkler

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THE TRUTH IS PUTTING ON ITS SHOES

A century ago, Mark Twain said, "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."

Even with today's technologies, Twain is still right.

False accusations have been leveled by foreign interest groups against Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold's mining operation in Indonesia. These groups have made unfounded charges about our environmental record and falsely tried to link us to tragic human rights violations near our mine.

Separate investigations by the Indonesian Human Rights Commission and the Catholic Bishop of Jayapura uncovered human rights abuses by some individuals in the military who are now being prosecuted. And both made clear that Freeport was not responsible for any of these deplorable incidents.

The Bishop also said: "Freeport is not at all involved in these violations of human rights."

Outrageously, the phony charges have been spread with the help of U.S. taxpayer dollars provided to foreign groups by the U.S. Agency for International Development. These same organizations have lobbied another government agency, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, to end 25 years of insurance support for the mine.

Statement of the Bishop of Jayapura

To whom it may concern:

Dated the 3rd of August 1995, I sent a report via the Indonesian Bishops Conference to the Indonesian National Commission for Human Rights about violations of human rights in the Timika area of Irian Jaya by members of the Indonesian Army.

I reported that 16 people were murdered and four others "disappeared" during the period from Oct. 1994 to June 1995.

My report is *not* a report about Freeport and does not contain accusations regarding Freeport...

...The National Commission of Human Rights has confirmed my report as true. Before I sent the report to the National Commission, I had never had contact about it with Freeport...

22 November 1995
Timika, Irian Jaya
Indonesia

H. F. M. Munninghoff
Bishop of Jayapura

We are proud of our record in Indonesia. We have built roads, schools, and hospitals, and created 17,000 jobs to help make a better life for our employees and their community. And we are investing $175 million in state-of-the-science programs to protect the environment.

Perhaps that is why a leading Wall Street investment analyst wrote recently that our operation "...should be considered a model of development..."

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Keep Our Troops Out of Bosnia

I was deeply disturbed by your editorial, "Bosnia: Support the President" (Dec. 4). This is hardly the kind of editorial one would expect from a conservative magazine.

The introduction of American troops into the civil and ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is doomed to lead to one of the most dangerous quagmires since Vietnam.

Both the British and Canadian United Nations commanders pointed out in a *60 Minutes* segment that this puts U.S. troops in harm's way in an untenable situation.

There are no defined lines between the combatants. The Serbs already hate the U.S. because of the intense bombing. There are 6 million land mines cluttering the landscape. Many remain undetected for years, until someone's legs are blown off. The terrain is mountainous with narrow roads and blown-up bridges, perfect for ambushes by combatants who are familiar with the territory.

This conflict between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs has gone on for centuries and will continue to go on long after we have left. Bill Clinton should not expect support from the Congress or the American people in some fruitless attempt to end a brutal civil war.

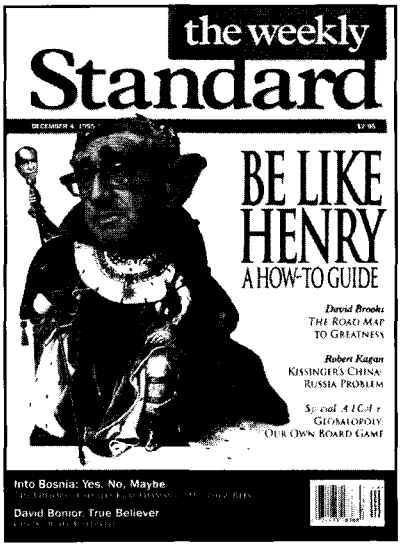
FREDERICK W. GUARDABASSI
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

Your editorial "Bosnia: Support the President" alleges that, notwithstanding the wisdom of the troop commitment, we are entangled in the quagmire and have too much at stake to back down now. Thus, the Republican opposition amounts to mere political pandering.

Certainly there are those on the right who will oppose the president simply to gain political ground. There are others, however, who look at the situation more rationally (see Matthew Rees's article, "The Hill, Balkanized," Dec. 4).

For three years, Clinton's policy has floundered. A few months ago, the president mentioned, in an offhand remark, that he will commit 25,000 troops to help NATO and the U.N. extricate themselves from the mess. Since that point, he has worked to craft an agreement predicated on troop commitment. Further, the agreement comes at a time when the president desperately needs to increase his domestic standing in time for the election season.

There is no strategy here, except a reelection strategy. The timetable is suspicious (the one-year deadline occurs right around election night). The GOP is concerned, for the right reasons, and the president needs to answer several questions before we gallop into the valley of death. What is the mission, beyond peacekeeping? When and how will it be completed? What are the rules



of engagement? And, finally, what is the exit strategy?

The GOP is right to question the president's actions. He needs to look further than November 1996. If he substantively answers the questions above, then we owe him our support.

E. SCOTT JOHNSON
ALPHARETTA, GA

I'm Not Irving Kristol

Whatever other merits may be claimed for A.J. Bacevich's article "*Commentary* Gets Religion" (Dec. 4), accuracy is not one of them. Nowhere in my contribution to "The National Prospect" symposium in the November issue of *Commentary* did I write that "a serious religious revival is underway in this country."

I don't dispute that, in some quarters at least, a serious religious revival *is* underway in this country, but my own contribution to the symposium was about something else. Bacevich seems to have me confused with Irving Kristol, which is flattering to me, but stupid of Bacevich.

HILTON KRAMER
NEW YORK, NY

Pro-Choice Alexander

I was puzzled by David Frum's recent article "Why Pro-Choice Failed" (Dec. 4). Frum states that the withdrawal of Arlen Specter from the presidential race "leaves Malcolm S. Forbes, Jr. as the only candidate for the Republican nomination who has not promised to do his best to outlaw abortion." What about Lamar Alexander?

Alexander's position on abortion seems to depend on whom you ask. Last spring, I watched a local Los Angeles television station profile Alexander, a pro-choice Republican candidate. In Nashville later, I met a Baptist deacon who was breathless with excitement over a pro-life candidate, also Alexander.

I wondered whether the former governor was competing with President Clinton for the "Slick Willie" disingenuousness award rather than the presidency.

Currently, after much waffling, Alexander seems to have settled for devolution, giving abortion back to the states. While this may qualify him as one of Frum's anti-abortion Republicans, it is a far cry from a "promise to outlaw abortion."

J. TERYLE PEARSON
COLUMBIA, TN

Dobson, Not for President

I am writing to object to the Scrapbook item "Dobson for President?" (Nov. 13). It was as inaccurate as it was sophomoric.

First, and contrary to one of your assertions, Dr. James Dobson neither "made a stink" after a meeting with Senator Phil Gramm nor "divided [Gramm's] base" of political support. He had simply expressed concern that the social and cultural issues so impor-

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Correspondence

tant to millions of Americans were being ignored by Republicans. Gramm has demonstrated an increasing awareness of this blind spot since he was encouraged by Dobson and others to reconsider his approach last spring.

The most insupportable and silly point in your item was the assertion that Dobson is "considering a third-party run himself."

As recently as a September interview with John Hockenberry of ABC News, Dobson again expressed his lack of interest in public office in no uncertain terms: "Let me say something to you that will make sure I never do [consider running for president]. I'm not qualified. I couldn't get elected. I wouldn't want it if I had it, and my wife would leave me if I did it! And I have no interest whatsoever in political office. I love what I'm doing here [at Focus on the Family]."

PAUL HETRICK
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

IN DEFENSE OF DOLE

Contrary to the Scrapbook item "Bob Dole's Powell Problem" (Dec. 4), I think Dole campaign manager Scott Reed is doing an outstanding job and deserves a continued vote of confidence from all Dole supporters. It is regrettable that THE WEEKLY STANDARD's anti-Dole coverage includes attempts at sowing dissension among our ranks.

In this case you failed, and you will fail also in your quest to deny Dole the GOP presidential nomination.

RICH BOND
ALEXANDRIA, VA

WISDOM AND NIAGARA

Matt Labash's send-up of Washington media panels ("Wooden Panels in Washington," Nov. 27) is marred by a glaring geographical error in his parting shot at Carl Rowan: "Who better to lead them than Carl Rowan, from whom pearls of conventional wisdom drop like the waters of the St. Lawrence River over Niagara?"

Rowan must not dispense any conventional wisdom whatsoever. For the great Niagara Falls are on the Niagara River, between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario—roughly 200 miles west of the St. Lawrence headwaters.

Nevertheless, Labash is to be commended for enduring so much Brunch with the Living Dead and staying awake long enough to write about it in such witty fashion.

TOM HOLT
PORTLAND, OR

THE EDITORS RESPOND: The geographical mistake was not the fault of Matt Labash. The editors apologize for their error.

BASEBALL DIDN'T BLOW IT

No, Christopher Caldwell, baseball didn't blow it again ("Baseball Blows It Again," Dec. 4). Without Albert Belle, the Cleveland Indians would have clinched the American League Central Division title by mid-August, instead of the Fourth of July weekend. Without Mo Vaughn, the Boston Red Sox would have been face down in the water by Independence Day.

More importantly for his wounded sport, Vaughn understands the importance of acting like a true "role model." He is now a beloved figure in the city that has not taken kindly to African-American sports stars.

Vaughn's as skilled at salesmanship (of his game) and citizenship as in hammering baseballs. Strange for a conservative like Caldwell to assume that character doesn't count.

As for Belle, he lost the American League Most Valuable Player award because of too many corked bats—in his belfry. Caldwell conveniently ignored Belle's tirade at NBC's Hannah Storm during the World Series. He also failed to mention Belle's alleged attempt to run down kids who threw eggs at his house on Halloween. Belle should spend less time making notes about pitchers and more time with people carrying other notebooks, microphones, and cameras.

The people who voted for the AL MVP did the game a great service. They spared it the embarrassment of honoring a player who is now Exhibit C—next to Bud Selig and Don Fehr—of baseball's greatest headaches.

GERARD F. EINHAUS
PHILADELPHIA, PA

KEEP THE EXCLUSIONARY RULE

In the course of telling us "Why We Should Decriminalize Crime" (Nov. 27), William Tucker trots out almost every tired warhorse in the stable of conservative arguments about criminal law. Virtually all of these overused claims are long overdue to be put down, none more so than the endless carping about the exclusionary rule.

Tucker gives the impression that the suppression of evidence due to the exclusionary rule is an ever-growing monster that threatens to devour the criminal justice system.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Evidence is suppressed in only a handful of all criminal cases—less than 2 percent. Even this rate exaggerates the impact of the rule, since the suppression rate is far lower in murder and robbery cases.

Tucker also misleads his readers by failing to inform them that the Supreme Court has significantly narrowed the protections of the exclusionary rule in the past 10-15 years, in cases like *U.S.* vs. *Leon*. And it may have slipped Tucker's notice, but in the Simpson case, the evidence from the warrantless search of Simpson's estate was *not* excluded, despite the obvious dishonesty of the detectives who conducted the search.

Conservatives need to grow up and learn to live with the exclusionary rule, the Miranda rule, and other procedural guarantees given to criminal defendants. To say that our crime problems result from the simple fairness extended by these guarantees flies in the face of both logic and evidence.

MARK WYLIE
LOS ANGELES, CA

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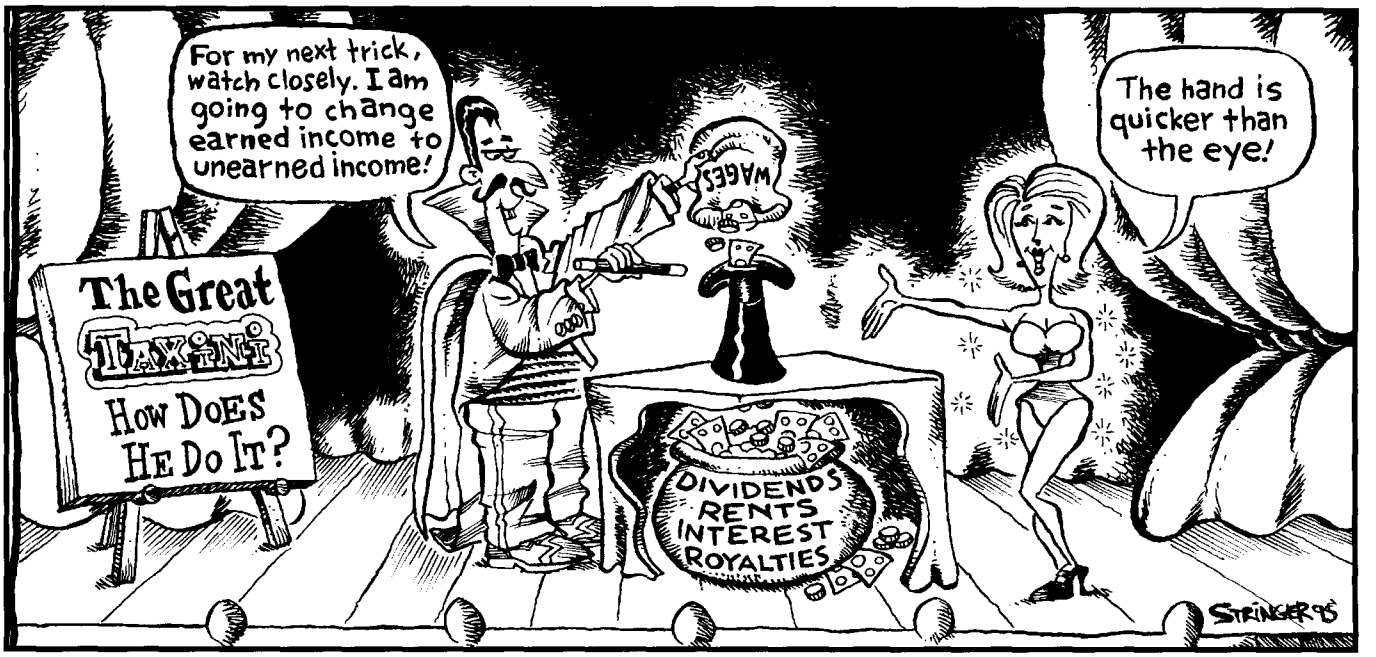

Only a little magic defeats the Flat Tax.

If there is one thing Washington never understands, it's human nature. Adam Smith's Invisible Hand warned all governments they can only collect taxes to the extent people are willing to pay them. When Washington eliminated interest deductions for cars, it gave birth to the leasing industry. With a 10-percent luxury tax on boats, unemployment increased by nearly a half-million people.

A booming opportunity for earned-to-unearned income magicians.

The flat tax may sound good at first hearing. But in the real world the next boom industry will be schemes to convert earned income into unearned, tax-free income.

If you manufacture, just open a subsidiary offshore. Then shift as much production overseas as possible and import those goods back at the highest cost base. Bring your profit back as interest or a dividend. Abracadabra! You just converted taxable income into tax-free investment income.

This scheme works in countless ways, even domestically. Who will benefit? Tax attorneys, CPA's, and lobbyists. Paper shuffling when we need production to expand our economy. The bottom line? The Tax Simplification Act of 1986 created a leasing industry to circumvent nondeductible interest payments for cars and depreciation. The Flat Tax will create even more creative transfer schemes.

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the weekly Standard

MODERATES AND GERRYMANDERS

There is much good-government mourning over the Senate retirements that will end some of Washington's most famously nonideological Republican and Democratic careers next year. They were angels, these Mark Hatfields and Sam Nunns, always rescuing the infant compromise from a legislative building engulfed by partisan flames. And soon they will be gone, just as so many House moderates went before them last November. Who will save the baby now? And why has "the system" stopped producing such heroic, temperate folk?

It's a disingenuous lament. Some among the current bumper crop of retirees are widely admired for skill and character. They will be missed on that basis, as *individuals*. But as a governing *ideal*, the dying "moderate tradition" in Congress leaves behind no loving widows—only some very partisan Democrats, distressed to lose a few more potential votes against the Republican majority's newly aggressive, conservative tide. If that tide were flowing in the opposite direction, if national politics favored *them*, you can bet Democrats would be pressing their advantage to the max, without all that weepy concern for the Capitol's "unnatural" new divisiveness.

AS A GOVERNING IDEAL, THE DYING 'MODERATE TRADITION' LEAVES BEHIND NO LOVING WIDOWS.

Want proof? Consider the Democratic party's position before the Supreme Court last week in two major voting rights cases. At issue is the construction of tortuously complicated electoral districts that provide safe House seats for more black and Hispanic officials. It's the one recent structural innovation that probably *will*, over time, work to produce an unnatural polarization of our politics. But the Democratic party couldn't care less. In both suits now before the court, the Clinton Justice Department and the Democratic National Committee vigorously *defend* the racial gerrymander.

Following the 1990 census, the Bush administration, at its nadir of cynicism, began interpreting the Voting Rights Act to require the creation of new electoral jurisdictions in which a majority of the voting-age population belongs to minority groups. Civil rights activists had long sought such a result, believing as they did (and do) that minority candidates will almost never win in white-majority districts and that minority voters are essentially disenfranchised because of it. And Republicans were suddenly prepared to exploit this ugly theory for the partisan opportunity it seemed to promise.

African Americans are the most reliable Democratic voters. If they are concentrated in a limited number of jurisdictions, there will be fewer Democratic votes in a state's remaining districts. And, therefore, more Republican congressmen. So Republican computers worked overtime to generate the serpentine, state-by-state district maps that might artificially increase membership in the Congressional Black Caucus. And Republican and NAACP lawyers persuaded a series of state legislatures to adopt those maps.

Did it work? Did the racial gerrymander make 1994's Republican congressional victory possible? The "bleached" congressional districts that were left behind once black voters were bunched into "majority-minority" enclaves surely did not *hurt* Republican candidates. In House districts whose black voting-age population declined after redistricting, Republicans won every open seat in the country last year—and lost all but one in districts whose black population rose. And in at least a small number of close-fought House races, "whiter" districts clearly helped tip the balance in the GOP's direction.

But it is also true that the current Republican House of Representatives is derived from exactly the same district boundaries that generated a 41-seat *Democratic* majority in 1992. Republicans enjoyed astonishing, sweeping success last year in Senate and gubernatorial races—campaigns in which congressional districting lines were entirely irrelevant. Big,

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potentially realigning elections *do* happen sometimes. Something more than computerized cartography was necessary to make Newt Gingrich speaker.

For two years now, the Supreme Court has looked askance at the use of race as the "predominant factor" in the creation of electoral districts. Defenders of the racial gerrymander now struggle to prove that it serves non-race-conscious interests, as well. It protects a state's incumbents, they say. Which incumbents? "Functional" incumbents, the DNC calls them—the black freshmen who become incumbents only *after* district lines are specially drawn to elect them. In essence, the Democratic party, against its own broad electoral interests but terrified to alienate its minority activist constituents, now argues that *white* Democratic incumbents threatened by racial gerrymanders—the immediate losers here—are comparatively worthless to their states.

Admirers of the Republican House that has arisen in the wake of this mostly intra-Democratic struggle might ask: What's the problem? There's a big one. Our political tradition insists on a realm of national interest that transcends even the most necessary partisan and ideological combat. And so we do not dispense legislative representation to groups—or races—in direct proportion to their numbers. We ask our citizens to think with their heads, not with their skin, and our legislative apportionment is based on something much more benign and fluid: where people live.

The racial gerrymander rejects this tradition of shifting, temporary coalitions in favor of the most fractious politics imaginable. Its enactment is an official signal that black Americans have black interests, white Americans have white ones, and that politicians cannot—in fact, *need* not—represent more than one set of interests at a time. As a blow to American political moderation, this is a rather more significant development than Mark Hatfield's retirement.

To RNC chairman Haley Barbour's credit, the Republican party, which did so much to father this travesty, has now withdrawn its official support of racial redistricting. Conservative lawyers now argue *against* the idea before the Supreme Court. And the Republican Congress, one hopes, will eventually move to clarify that the Voting Rights Act does not require—indeed, *forbids*—gerrymandering for the purpose of allocating "black" and "white" House members.

And Democrats? Do they really believe their current eulogies for a politics not of "us and them" but "all together?" Not now, they don't. That claim won't be honest until the Democratic party drops its support for race-based congressional districting.

— David Tell, for the Editors

SPANKING THE NANNY STATE

by Tod Lindberg

THE TAX CUTS MAY BE IN PERIL, the line-item veto languishing, welfare reform at a stalemate, and the unzeroed-out National Endowment for the Arts busily preparing for its next foray into the bowels of our culture. But say this for the 104th Congress: You can drive faster.

More precisely, Washington decided to butt out of the business of setting speed limits on the nation's highways. They're gunning their engines outside of Butte, Montana, just like in the good old days before Arab oil embargoes, disco, national malaise, and the other political and cultural catastrophes of the 1970s. There is not much of anything in Montana—even Montanans concede this—and what's there is far from everything else. Now another thing that isn't there is a speed limit, at least not during the day.

When the federal law cranking down speeds to 55 miles an hour took effect in 1974, Montana and eight other states—in that chest-puffing style that has become the signature of local officials denouncing the meddlesome federal govuhment—adopted provisions that would cause their old limits to be restored once Washington saw reason or cried "Uncle." Barring a change of heart in the state capitals, that means you can now, or soon will be able to, go 75 in Wyoming, Nevada, and Kansas and 70 in South Dakota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and California. The Big Sky's the limit in Montana. Other states, though not all, will soon surely follow suit and raise their limits.

Our long national nightmare is over, in other words. No longer that feeling of suspended animation upon slowing down to 55, having spotted a cop.

There is other good news in the legislation, whose main purpose was to designate a National Highway System, which in turn freed about $5 billion for highway construction that had been held up since Oct. 1, the deadline Congress gave itself a couple years ago for completing the system. States no longer face penalties if they fail to require motorcycle riders to wear helmets. States no longer have to recycle rubber from old

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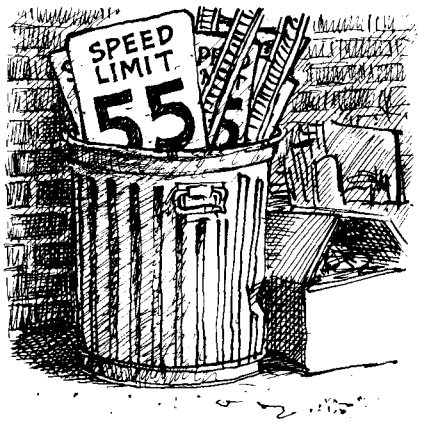
tires into the mix used for highways, a ridiculous piece of pork-barrelage passed to satisfy a well-connected recycler in Connecticut. Best of all, it is no longer mandatory to designate distances on highway signs in kilometers as well as miles. Give the Republican Revolution another couple of years, and the scourge of the metric system might actually be banished forever.

The states' rights rhetoric that accompanied the repeal of the speed limit would warm the cockles of the conservative Republican heart. If you oppose doing away with the national limit, thundered proponents, you are saying that state legislatures and departments of transportation are too stupid to do the right thing for their people.

In the end, the House voted 313-112 to get rid of the national speed limit. The total included 93 Democrats, almost half the party's number in the House. Fifteen Democrats joined 50 Republicans to ensure its acceptance by the Senate.



Bill Garner

Best of all, perhaps, from the GOP revolutionary's point of view, the hated Clinton administration had long professed its opposition to the measure. Mike McCurry, the president's spokesman, had said that if the president enjoyed the line-item veto power that Congress professed to want to give him, this is just the sort of measure he would use it to strike. (This only served to remind Republicans of why they haven't yet gotten around to appointing conferees to work out the kinks in line-item veto legislation.)

The president signed the legislation despite McCurry's pious reminder of Bill Clinton's deep concern that it might lead to more highway fatalities.

If only welfare reform were so simple. Or anything else, for that matter. Do the people's bidding, and jam it down the throat of the status-quo administration: This was exactly the revolution some of the most fervent revolutionaries envisioned.

It's true that when it was in charge, the Democratic congressional leadership effectively blocked any consideration of a repeal of the speed limit—a straightforward coalition-politics payout to the Naderites and other "safety" groups. And it's also true that the question of whether or not there should be a national speed limit isn't a bad proxy for the question of whether you are a liberal or a conservative. This is the nanny state hitting the open road. Safety and energy conservation, the issues for liberals, are not the issues for conservatives. Individual freedom and an overweening federal government are the issues.

Still, this victory is not much of a model for anything else. The bill includes a measure that will withhold highway funds from states that do not lower the drunk-driving threshold for those under 21 years old to 0.02 percent (0.1 being typical for adults). The states are apparently not as full of common-sense wisdom on the subject of teenage drinking as they are on speed limits.

This is progress, something real for the folks back home. But it's also another lesson in how hard it is to make progress, and on the dicey relationship between principle and legislation, even in these nominally revolutionary times. ♦

OUTREACH—OR DEPENDENCY?

by Sean Paige

PERHAPS NO FEDERAL PROGRAM PROVIDES more damning testimony of the law of unintended consequences, and the grotesque mockery that can be made of our best intentions, than the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. What began in 1973 as a modest effort to aid the aged, blind, and physically disabled has today become the Pandora's box of federal bureaucracies.

Each look inside releases a new apparition: 250,000 drug addicts and alcoholics have used it to feed their habits, and more than 770,000 children qualify because they can't participate in "age-appropriate activities." Tens of thousands of county and city prisoners may be receiving their SSI checks behind bars right now.

It's not at all surprising to learn that a program carrying an $8 billion annual price tag in 1980 today tops out at more than $25 billion and claims more than 6 million beneficiaries. What is surprising is the $33 million the federal government has spent trying to recruit *even more* beneficiaries to SSI's already explod-

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ing rolls. In 1990, the government began funding "Outreach Demonstration Projects"—crusades to "maximize the rate of participation among those eligible to receive benefits." The Social Security Administration "has continually tried to increase the rate of participation," according to a nearly 1,000-page review of the projects, "and to overcome those factors that might prevent or discourage participation."

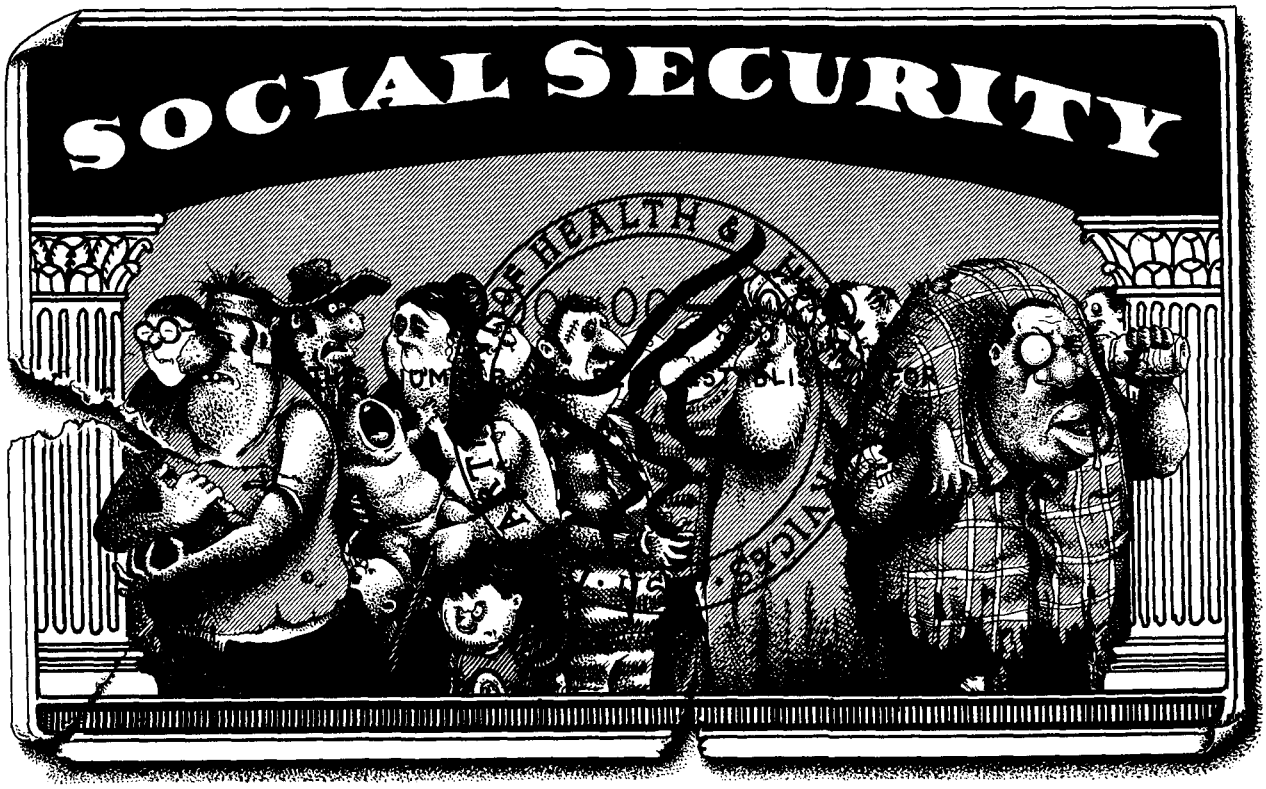
To that end, organizations that were awarded outreach grants spent tax dollars on mass mailings, billboards, handouts, radio and television spots, newspaper ads, "Benefit Fairs," mobile SSI sign-up units, door-to-door canvassing, booths at state fairs and Native American gatherings, and even an SSI rap song. But giving money away isn't as easy as it sounds, particularly when the government is involved.

Among the barriers SSI's emissaries had to overcome were "the stigma of receiving public assistance," a "mistrust of government programs," and "a reluctance to admit or accept disability as a permanent condition." And there was, as well, the appalling incompetence with which grantees went about their work.

One South Dakota grantee who had scant success signing up new beneficiaries bemoaned the attitudes of those with whom he came into contact: "One major barrier to the success of the program appears to have been 'Midwest Pride'—the belief in the importance of earning one's own keep and looking down upon financial assistance . . . which seems to have been a large factor in the immunity of Bon Homme County residents, in particular, to outreach efforts. Despite their efforts, outreach staff reported being unable to dissuade beliefs that SSI is a welfare program."

Grantees had greater difficulties dealing with American Indians in New Mexico. Besides encountering resistance from tribal elders, who wanted to "deal directly with the federal government, as one nation to another, rather than through the grantee," SSI outreachers ran into another barrier—"Navajo time." "Navajo time lacks the sense of urgency that characterizes the mainstream U.S. culture," says the report. "People don't worry about such things as clocks and calendars, making appointments, reading mail when it comes, or following through on things within any set timeframe. As a result, the grantee had some difficulties in getting tribal members to attend meetings to discuss the outreach." In Arizona, obviously ineligible Native Americans were processed nonetheless because outreach workers "did not want them to hear 'no' from the 'white man' once again."

Plans to drive an SSI mobile unit through rough neighborhoods around East St. Louis, Ill., flushing potential SSI beneficiaries out with bullhorns, also proved vexing. "The conditions inside the van proved



Sean Delonas

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uncomfortable for taking more than one application at a time, and even then the circumstances were less than ideal," says the report. The van was later sold, a smaller transport vehicle leased, and the proceeds from the sale used to lengthen the outreach.

Two canvassers for a government grantee in New Orleans were shot—neither fatally—and others were shunned by residents fearful they were rent-hiking spies of the local housing authority. According to the report, the $170,000 project foundered because "infighting between Tenants Associations made it impossible for the tenants of one housing project to go into another project to conduct outreach efforts."

Attempts by a California grantee to troll for beneficiaries in Orange County's Cambodian and Vietnamese communities were foiled by shady middlemen (sometimes euphemistically called "community helpers") who get a tidy sum signing immigrants up for benefits, serving as translators, and coaching immigrants on how to fake disabilities. And successfully, too.

Middlemen have an 80 percent success rate at winning SSI awards; much better than the 30 percent batting average of the local Social Security office. Drug gangs menaced door-to-door canvassers, and sloppy translations meant culturally-correct printed materials were six months late in arriving. Then there was this problem: At least 60 percent of Cambodian households already have one or more members on SSI.

A drive to recruit the homeless in the Northeast went awry over the question of whether substance abuse alone could serve as grounds for a disability, or if a second condition (like cirrhosis of the liver or crack-induced psychosis) was required. Just when that issue was resolved—no second condition was necessary—the project was hit with an Unfair Labor Practices grievance filed by workers at the local Social Security field office. They objected to anyone other than qualified professionals like themselves taking SSI applications.

Hurricane Andrew intervened in another star-crossed outreach effort, this one to sign up people with AIDS, blowing away the houses of two project staffers and scattering potential beneficiaries to the wind. In addition, because "peer counselors" on the project were all required to be HIV-positive, the grantee got bogged down continually replacing and retraining the staff as it fell ill.

Grambling State University, backed by a $175,000 outreach grant, succeeded in signing up only four people for SSI—which works out to roughly $43,750 per sign-up! Officials at the Social Security Administration reported having trouble reaching the project director, who, it turns out, "had been terminated from the University" and was "facing criminal charges for misappropriating University and grant funds."

When all was said and done—and $33 million spent—these crusades had a negligible effect on SSI rolls. "Among applicants and awardees throughout the nation during the project period, the outreach projects contributed only 0.30 percent and 0.27 percent respectively," according to the study. One doesn't know whether to be saddened or relieved.

Sean Paige is editor of **Government WasteWatch,** *published by Citizens Against Government Waste.*

Talk Left, Move Right

by Fred Barnes

By the time President Clinton returned from his trip to Europe on December 3, the struggle at the White House over forging a budget deal with Republicans was over. Those arguing for no deal—George Stephanopoulos, various aides in Hillary Clinton's orbit, even political adviser Dick Morris for a spell—had all but given up. Clinton himself had always figured a budget agreement is the best thing for him politically. And he's right. But now the White House is worried Republicans may not be willing to compromise enough so Clinton can reach a deal without, as a senior adviser put it, "caving on core values," whatever they are.

Shortly after Clinton released his own version of a seven-year balanced budget on December 7, a White House official said he was mystified by Republicans' reluctance to come to terms: "I don't understand it." Sure, the president sounds in his public statements like he won't give an inch either. But Republicans should know better than to be swayed by that. It's just rhetoric, the official indicated.

In fact, the president has adopted a new political posture. In his first two-plus years in the White House, he talked conservative and governed liberal. Now, as he negotiates a deal on balancing the budget and seeks re-election, he talks liberal and governs conservative. Well, not quite conservative, but his policy on spending and taxes is a lot less liberal than his public pronouncements.

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When he vetoed the GOP balanced budget bill on December 6, Clinton sounded like an unrepentant reactionary liberal. He was blocking provisions, the president said, that would "turn Medicare into a second class system," raise taxes on the poor, and "squander our natural resources." The bill would also deny medical care "to hundreds of thousands of pregnant women and disabled children." And so on.

But Clinton's substantive position is much less kneejerk. Look how far he's already been pulled by House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the Republican Congress.

On December 7, 1994, one year before he sent his balanced budget to Capitol Hill, he not only wasn't in favor of balancing the budget in seven years, he wasn't in favor of balancing it ever. Nor was he for any kind of tax cut. Nor did he have any plans for reforming Medicare and slowing its growth to save it from bankruptcy. And turning welfare over to the states wasn't on his agenda either.

Clinton is ready to give more ground, so long as Republicans yield some, too. He and his advisers believe he is strong enough politically to make concessions without inflaming left-wing Democrats. For instance, he may propose a further reduction in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is used to calculate cost-of-living increases in Social Security and other programs. Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York has bombarded the White House with recommendations to adjust the CPI. He sent press secretary Mike McCurry, once Moynihan's spokesman, a Labor Department booklet entitled "Understanding the CPI: Answers to Some Questions."

A senior Clinton adviser says the "structure" of an accord with Republicans is now visible. The White House would agree to more savings in Medicare and Medicaid and to a bigger tax cut. Republicans would adjust their budget on these issues, plus give Clinton money for his signature programs—AmeriCorps, Goals 2000, job training, environmental enforcement. In the end, Republicans would get 75 percent, if you judge their gains by how far they will have dragged Clinton from where he was a year ago. But in dealing with Clinton's December 7 budget, they'll have to split the difference.

It was a close call at the White House whether Clinton would propose a seven-year balanced budget at all. The key figure was Morris, the one-time Republican consultant who'd advised the president to position himself midway between Gingrich and House Democratic Whip David Bonior, the party's ideological czar in Congress. Surprisingly, Morris flirted in November with the idea of rejecting a deal and prolonging the fight with Republicans right through the 1996 election, pounding them relentlessly on Medicare. Stephanopoulos and Harold Ickes, the deputy White House chief of staff, agreed.

But the risks were too great. For one thing, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan insists that interest rates will rise if no budget deal is forged. With a deal, though, he's promised a cut in short-term rates as early as December 19. With the economy slowing, Greenspan's role became more decisive, since Clinton is desperate to avert a recession in 1996. Moreover, there's fear of a stock market correction, absent a deal. And governing by "continuing resolution" came to be seen as awful as well, since Republicans would require a resolution cutting deeply into appropriations. "It would be devastating to programs we care about," said a Clinton aide.

Morris relented, though he thought Clinton should have waited a while before complying with the GOP demand to produce a seven-year budget. That tipped the balance overwhelmingly in favor of the dealmakers—chief of staff Leon Panetta, counselor Bill Curry, McCurry, political director Doug Sosnick, and the president.

Count that also as a victory for Republicans. It means their breathtaking accomplishments in changing the size and scope of the federal government are now likely to be enacted (in somewhat diluted form). But there's a downside. With a budget deal, Clinton will be able to claim in 1996 that he cut spending and taxes, balanced the budget, saved Medicare, and reformed welfare, while simultaneously pacifying liberals with boasts of having staved off more "extreme" GOP proposals. A clever ploy, and it may work. ♦

The Issue in Bosnia: NATO

by Adam Garfinkle

Is the American mission about peace in Bosnia, or is it about preventing the next European-sown world war? Neither, in truth. The real issues at stake in the Bosnia incursion are the future vitality and the future scope of NATO.

Recent U.S. policy in Europe has foundered most of all on its inability to gauge the scale of issues or see connections between them. The Clinton administration at first underestimated, and now overestimates,

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the stakes of the Bosnian war. It first overestimated, and now may underestimate, the difficulties of expanding NATO outside of Western Europe. Most alarming, however, it has managed to discuss these issues as though they have nothing to do with one another.

But Bosnia and NATO expansion have everything to do with each other: How could a major American commitment in the Balkans *not* have a profound effect on prospects for expansion? What is this mission, after all, if not a qualified and temporary extension of NATO membership to Bosnia?

Though the "threat" is obviously different, the alliance's guarantee of Bosnia's borders and its sovereign integrity is not generically different from the shield NATO has provided its weaker members for more than 40 years. Even the Hungarians, whose country is being used only as a staging ground for the Bosnian theater, are convinced that the current mission will bring them closer to NATO membership. So are the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and even the Romanians, who have struggled to get token forces involved in the mission. But the administration, somehow, cannot find the words realistically to discuss a connection that its own deeds manifest daily. Indeed, until Secretary of State Warren Christopher alluded to the issue in remarks last week, it had not discussed the matter publicly at all.

SENDING U.S. GROUND FORCES INTO BOSNIA IS A STRATEGIC GAMBLE OF THE HIGHEST ORDER. THE TRUE TEST OF THE MISSION'S SUCCESS IS WHETHER NATO EMERGES STRONGER AND WHETHER THE EASTWARD EXPANSION OF NATO WILL PROCEED.

Yet the most basic connection is obvious. If NATO can pull Bosnia out of a war, many will conclude that surely it can guard the states of East-Central Europe from falling into another one. But if, on the other hand, NATO is bloodied militarily and denied diplomatically in Bosnia, it will demonstrate all too vividly the potentially staggering costs of accepting a clutch of new countries into the alliance, all of them more like Bosnia in history and geography than current alliance members.

In this light, sending U.S. ground forces into Bosnia is a strategic gamble of the highest order. The true test of the mission's success is whether NATO emerges stronger from it and whether, as a result, the alliance's expansion eastward will then proceed. But despite its recent airy rhetoric, one looks in vain for evidence that anyone in the Clinton administration really understands this. It's not a *failure to intervene* in Bosnia that risks European calamity, as the administration claims, but the *failure of an intervention* that would keep NATO from evolving into a more inclusive European security system.

Admittedly, NATO expansion is a contentious matter; experienced analysts with strong arguments differ, as well suits what is by far the most significant question of European policy before us. Many believe NATO would be better off if it did not expand, and their concerns are not trivial.

Though proponents of expansion deny it, moving NATO eastward means managing the ethnic conflicts in which East-Central Europe is so rich, like it or not. No attempt to design rules of enlargement to avoid such a task can succeed.

But this is as it should be because, properly understood, NATO expansion is not mainly about deterring Russia militarily but about stabilizing East-Central Europe. NATO's failure to do *that* is what is truly dangerous to European security in the years ahead; otherwise the region could well become a platform of Russo-German intrigue that could end by pulling Germany from its European Union moorings, souring U.S.-German relations, and shrinking American influence on the continent.

Those who oppose NATO expansion either do not credit such concerns or else fear the price of dealing with them in the face of possible Russian hostility. But unless it is exorbitant, it is worth paying a price for a NATO role in stabilizing East-Central Europe. It will seem a very exorbitant price, however, if a parade of bodybags and reams of stomach-churning full-color war-footage are what comes home from Bosnia.

Putting NATO at risk in order to pacify Bosnia, for the sake of repaired reputation rather than inherent interests, is a huge commitment that bears directly on the definition of NATO's future scope and mission. The literal risks in the Bosnian theater proper, though hardly insignificant, pale beside the true gravity of the issue. It is therefore mysterious, if not frightening, that even as administration principals speak of the broader implications of the Bosnian war, they understate the link between the military mission at hand and the alliance's expansion. They want to save NATO by using it to intervene in Bosnia, but they seem unable to articulate what they are saving it for.

Adam Garfinkle is executive editor of **The National Interest.**

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PROMISE THEM ANYTHING

by Paul R. Williams

THE 164 PAGES OF THE Dayton Peace Accords set forth numerous commitments by the parties. Notably absent, however, are additional commitments made by the United States and Europe to coax the parties into signing. These official but unwritten commitments are in many cases as important to a workable peace in Bosnia as those in the agreement.

One may ask, then, why these commitments remained unwritten. One conceivable answer is that the United States and its NATO partners were simply dishonest with the parties and never intended to fulfill their promises. But this is surely not the case. One must assume that the politics of the peace talks and the complexities of intra-NATO relationships were not conducive to putting these commitments into writing.

The primary oral commitment was a promise made by the senior Americans at the talks—the secretary of State, the secretary of Defense, and a three-star general—that the United States would ensure the immediate lifting of the U.N. arms embargo on Bosnia and would arm and train Bosnian government forces to a level of defensive parity with all Serbian forces operating in Bosnia.

When members of the Bosnian delegation questioned the willingness of the NATO partners to permit such a U.S. operation, they were told that Washington had bluntly informed the British and French of the plan, which would proceed with or without their consent, and that the arm-and-train program was considered essential to NATO's exit strategy from Bosnia.

One and a half weeks into the peace talks, the Bosnian delegation sought to enshrine these assurances in a Memorandum of Understanding. To its surprise, the United States balked. The Americans' unwillingness to sign on the dotted line should have given the Bosnians pause, but the U.S. delegation insisted that political imperatives required leaving the assurances unwritten.

The nature of these political imperatives became clearer as the U.S. negotiating team began to couch its commitment to arm and train Bosnian government forces in terms of "ensuring that such arming and training would happen" and demanding that the Bosnian government agree to regional arms control.

When pushed to explain why they were hedging the commitment to arm and train, the Americans asserted that their NATO allies would only support an arm-and-train program if it were coupled with a regional arms-control agreement. The U.S. delegation also raised "serious doubts" as to the willingness of Congress to support arm-and-train, as well as concern over pre-empting a congressional prerogative.

One might wonder at this point what became of the flash of American leadership in NATO and the U.S. promise to overrule allies' objections to the arm-and-train program. One must also wonder where the U.S. delegation was getting its advice on the congressional mood, given that Congress on three separate occasions had called for the lifting of the arms embargo and already had allocated over $250 million for the immediate provision of weapons to the Bosnian government.

In case Congress had not made its views sufficiently clear, Majority Leader Robert Dole issued a statement calling for the inclusion in the peace agreement of a clear written commitment to arm and train the Bosnians.

On the penultimate day of the negotiations, the Bosnian delegation was presented with yet another European invention in the form of a U.N. resolution seeking to lift the arms embargo (as promised), but only in phases, which would prevent the Bosnian government from obtaining weapons necessary for its self-defense until the NATO implementation force had begun to withdraw.

By the end of the Dayton peace talks, the unambiguous promise of the United States to arm and train the Bosnian government had been transformed into a series of commitments, which give the Europeans the regional arms-control regime and the phased lifting of the arms embargo they wanted and guarantee the Serbs a balance of military forces substantially in their favor.

They do not, however, enable the United States to fulfill an important piece of its military exit strategy, and they fail to provide any realistic expectation that the Bosnians will have the means of defending their fledgling democratic state when NATO withdraws in time for the 1996 U.S. presidential election.

The Bosnian government has shown flexibility by agreeing to an arms regime that allows Serbia two-and-a-half times more weaponry than Bosnia (with one-third of the Bosnian amount being allocated to Bosnian Serbs) and by agreeing to the phased lifting of the embargo even though this will deny the Bosnians the timely opportunity to acquire weapons for their own defense. Now the United States must keep its promises.

If the United States fails to fulfill its commitment

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to arm and train Bosnian government forces, one must doubt whether it will honor its other unwritten promises. The most important of these are the commitment to respond to Serbian aggression with overwhelming and disproportionate force; the commitment that NATO will patrol vigorously throughout the territory of the Republika Srpska (the Serbian part of Bosnia); the commitment that NATO will react immediately to potential threats of ethnic cleansing and to threats against returning refugees within its area of operations; and the commitment not to transform the NATO implementation troops into another hapless peacekeeping force by adopting the U.N.'s pacifist mentality.

Paul R. Williams, executive director of the Public International Law and Policy Group, served in the Bosnian delegation to the Dayton peace talks.

MYTHICAL MURPHY BROWN

by Michael Lynch

THE MYTHICAL MURPHY BROWN—the highly paid professional woman who chooses to have a child out of wedlock—is back, courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau. On November 8, the bureau released a Current Population Report entitled "Fertility of American Women" by Amara Bachu, which purported to have located the long-sought Brown. Here's how some of our nation's leading newspapers handled the discovery:

The *San Francisco Examiner* headline screamed, "Single Motherhood Going Upscale."

The lead to the *Austin American Statesman* story proclaimed, "The unmarried mother in America is increasingly a 30-something college graduate with a professional job."

The *Arizona Republic* reported, "Move over pregnant teenagers of America. The Murphy Browns are coming up from behind. That's right, the unmarried mother in America is slowly shifting profiles: In the past decade, she is increasingly a 30-something college grad with a professional job, says Amara Bachu, author of the Census Study."

The headline in the *Houston Chronicle* announced, "Single motherhood rising steeply . . . The Big Surprise: It's Mostly Older Women, Not Teen-agers."

The reification of Murphy Brown was taking place, and the report's author, Amara Bachu, was driving the story. Bachu told the *Houston Chronicle*: "We have seen the changes, especially among white women. . . . Their rates have almost doubled since 1982." She told the Associated Press, "Most of these women are economically independent. They are also older, their biological clock is ticking off, so they cannot wait to find a suitable man."

While other newsworthy data from the report, such as fertility rates for immigrants, made it into some stories (Bachu stressed them to me on the phone), the Murphy Brown angle clearly won the day. But was there actually evidence in the report that Murphy Browns are eclipsing teenage mothers? To find out, it is instructive to compare the points emphasized in the text with the data in the tables.

Lately, the Census Bureau has dropped the five- to ten-page discussion that used to accompany the release of new data, preferring a two-page "highlight" setting

Sean Delonas

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out patterns and trends as bullet points. After the release of Bachu's report, the media homed in on one bullet in particular, prominently featured in both the report and the press release: "About 7 percent of never-married teenagers had borne a child, while among women in their thirties, about 4 out of every 10 had borne a child out of wedlock."

For those who haven't read *How to Lie with Statistics*, let's deconstruct this statement, which appears at first glance to imply that an astounding preponderance of unwed mothers are out of the Murphy Brown mold.

In fact, it contains a flagrant sleight of hand. The final clause should read: about 4 out of every 10 never-married women in their thirties had borne a child out of wedlock *at some point in their lives*. Thus, the sentence does not compare the reproductive behavior of teens with that of single women in their thirties. The 4 out of 10 include women in their thirties who had babies back in their teens and twenties as well as their thirties but never tied the knot.

And there is another source of confusion. Think about it. How many girls 15 to 19 are married? Very few. How many women in their 30s are or have been married? Most. While 96 percent of teenagers have never been married, only 17 percent of women in their 30s have never been married. The groups being compared are of wildly unequal size; it is hard to relate 7 percent of a very large group to 40 percent of a quite small one.

REGRETTABLY, THE BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS ON THE SOCIAL ILLS THAT PROLIFERATE WITH SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS HAS NEVER BEEN ACCEPTED IN FACULTY LOUNGES AND JOURNALISTIC HAUNTS.

In fact, other figures in the Census report are much more revealing—and corrosive of the Murphy Brown myth.

From July 1993 to June 1994, 72 percent of all teenage births were to unmarried women, while only 11 percent of births to women between 30 and 44 were illegitimate. Furthermore, the increase in births to unmarried women between Bachu's base year, July 1989-June 1990, and 1993-94 was higher for teens (7 percent) than for women ages 30-44 (4 percent).

Or compare the two groups' contributions to the pool of illegitimate children. In 1993-94, girls ages 15-19 accounted for 29 percent of all births to unmarried women; if women ages 20-24 are included, the combined group accounted for two out of three babies born out of wedlock. By contrast, the group from which our blissful, self-fulfilled, independent Murphy Browns come, the 30-44 age bracket, accounts for 17 percent of all out-of-wedlock births.

The ice on which the mythical Murphy Brown skates gets even thinner. The TV character is college-educated and a professional. Factoring educational achievement into the analysis shows that a mere 4.7 percent of all illegitimate births in 1993-94 were to women with a bachelor's degree. This, by the way, was slightly lower than in Bachu's base year. Only 6 percent of all illegitimate births were to professionals in 1993-94. While this is up from 4 percent in 1989-90 (a whopping increase from the statistician's point of view), the phenomenon remains very limited. Yes, more single professionals are having children—but still very few of them are, and they still make up a paltry share of all unmarried mothers.

Meanwhile, the important points about the educational and employment status of unmarried women who gave birth in 1993-94—none of which made the Census press release—are grim: More than one-third hadn't graduated from high school. Three-quarters had not attended college. And nearly two-thirds were jobless. Finally, there is the matter of the children's welfare. Here, the telling comparisons are between children born to unmarried and to married parents.

Consider education: While more than one-third of children born out of wedlock have mothers who haven't graduated from high school, fewer than one-sixth of children born inside marriage had parents without a high-school diploma. As for the ballyhooed college-graduate single mother, fewer than 5 percent of children born out of wedlock are lucky enough to have her. By contrast, 25 percent of children born to a married couple have the benefit of a mother with a bachelor's degree.

The differences in the economic status of children inside and outside marriage are staggering. In 1992, nearly half of families headed by a single mother lived in poverty, but only one out of 14 married-couple families was below the poverty line. While 25 percent of children grow up in single-parent families, these children constitute 60 percent of those who are poor.

Almost four years after then-vice president Dan Quayle's famous speech citing Murphy Brown as a deplorable sign of the times, it is beyond dispute that the breakdown of the family exacerbates nearly every social pathology from which America suffers. A host of luminaries, from conservatives George Gilder and Charles Murray to liberals Daniel Patrick Moynihan

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and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, has pinned rising rates of welfare, crime, drug addiction, and educational failure on the proliferation of single-parent households.

Regrettably, this bipartisan consensus has never been accepted in faculty lounges and journalistic haunts, where 1960s relativism continues to thrive. In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, academics and journalists still search for the exceptions—successful cases of never-married parents—and use them to argue that single-parenting is just another perfectly viable lifestyle choice. Bachu planted her study in this fertile ground—which is why it is necessary that the study be debunked, before it dribbles unchallenged into more news stories and columns and is cited in college classrooms across America.

Quayle and the others are right, of course—our unprecedented rates of illegitimacy are harming society. And they are still on the rise, in almost all ethnic groups. Family breakdown is not a racial problem, it is an American problem, and public resources ought not be used, by the Census Bureau or anyone else, to create a fantasyland. The production of fictions like *Murphy Brown* belongs properly in Hollywood.

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A Little Girl, Murdered

by William Tucker

It was a story of almost unspeakable horror. A bright, vivacious six-year-old was brutalized by her mother and stepfather, sexually abused, hung from a shower rod "just to see if she would die," tattooed with ring imprints that police first thought were cigarette burns, and beaten until her bones were protruding from her fingers. When the girl lost control of her bowels under this torture, her mother smeared her face with feces, used her head to mop the floor, and finally threw her against a concrete wall, killing her.

Yet it took only three days for the *New York Daily News* to find the real culprit—Newt Gingrich and the Republicans. They were responsible because flint-hearted budget cuts had left harried social workers unable to deal with the overload of cases. It is, apparently, unacceptable for Newt Gingrich to implicate the welfare system in some grisly murders, but it is entirely acceptable to implicate him in this one—him, and a general social malaise that had the papers talking of Kitty Genovese. "She was not killed by an individual, but by the silence of many," proclaimed *Time*, carefully excerpting a statement made by the Rev. Gianni Agostinelli at the funeral.

If indeed New York City's Child Welfare Administration (CWA) had been neglectful, no one would ever know. Hiding behind state confidentiality laws to protect complainants, its executive deputy director, Kathryn Croft, refused to open files on the case. Someone in her office, however, did manage to leak a memo from Croft to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in which the deputy administrator blamed budget cuts. "The child and her family should have got services," argued Croft. "With appropriate interventions, services, and follow up, [Elisa] would be alive today."

In fact, as the records showed, Croft's agency and other government agencies were intimately involved all along. Their efforts, however, had been on the side of the child's killer—her mother.

Elisa Izquierdo was born in 1989 while her mother, Awilda, was living in a Brooklyn homeless shelter. The father, Gustavo Izquierdo, was a cook at the facility. Awilda—who had two older children by another man—was addicted to crack. When Elisa was born addicted, hospital social workers immediately gave her to Gustavo. Miraculously, the young Cuban refugee turned out to be a good father. He placed Elisa in a Montessori school, where the vivacious girl was introduced to Prince Michael of Greece, who promised to pay Elisa's tuition to the exclusive Brooklyn Friends Academy.

In the meantime, Awilda had married Carlos Lopez, a crack addict and small-time criminal, and managed to regain custody of her first two children from relatives. She also secured unsupervised visits with Elisa. It was on these visits that the beatings and torture began.

As Elisa told her father of the beatings, Gustavo became alarmed and petitioned the family court to end the visits. Officials at the Montessori school also filed a complaint with the CWA, to no avail. Then Gustavo contracted cancer. As his condition worsened, he made plans to leave Elisa with relatives in Cuba. He died before he could make the journey. A cousin, Elsa Canizares, who also knew of the beatings, tried to prevent Elisa's return to her mother and offered to adopt her.

Here is the way *Time* describes their confrontation in family court: "Canizares arrived for the June 1994

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custody hearing alone. Awilda, by contrast, brought a small army. Her lawyer that day was from the Legal Aid Society, which maintained that its case workers had visited the Lopezes and found that 'Elisa expressed a strong desire to live with her mother' and siblings. Also backing Awilda was the CWA. . . . Finally, there was Project Chance, a federally funded parenting program for the poor run by a man named Bart O'Connor."

In other words, the whole federally funded poverty establishment lined up for Awilda, doing what it does best—aiding and abetting the worst instincts of the poor. It was no contest. Awilda got the child. From there it was all downhill. Husband and wife beat her daughter so badly that she began to regress. She lost control of her bowels and refused to communicate. This convinced Awilda that the child's late father had "put the devil in her."

At one point, in a moment of rationality, Awilda pleaded with O'Connor of Project Chance to take the girl off her hands. O'Connor visited the apartment, found urine and feces everywhere, and agreed. Then Awilda changed her mind. O'Connor contacted CWA (which reportedly said it was "too busy"), but found himself hogtied by federal regulations governing his own agency, which forbade him from filing Awilda's statements to the CWA without her permission.

Meanwhile, pleas and warnings to the CWA from school authorities, neighbors, and relatives were all brushed aside. Then in November, Carlos went back to prison for violating his drug parole. Awilda apparently cracked. After Elisa's murder, police said they had never seen a child so brutally beaten.

The epidemic of child abuse that supposedly reveals the hard-hearted core of America in fact has nothing to do with the size of social-services budgets or the caring or non-caring of institutional bureaucracies. No government agency, no matter how draconic or intrusive, could possibly police every home for child abuse. Rather, the real problem is the breakdown of other social institutions—all too often facilitated by government programs.

To be specific, the much touted epidemic of child abuse is in fact the result of one thing—the growing number of children who are living with adult men who are not their fathers. As David Blankenhorn points out in *Fatherless America*, the prevailing ideology among social workers and academics has become that "fathers don't matter." Anyone can supposedly be a father, and as long as there is a "male role model" somewhere on the horizon, single mothers can be entrusted with a growing portion of the nation's children.

Yet this is manifestly untrue. One of the most carefully hidden facts of the current "crisis" is that the vast majority of child abuse is being committed by stepfathers and "boyfriends" who are "filling the male role" in single-parent households. According to one recent study, a child living with an unrelated male is 40 times as likely to be the victim of abuse or incest as one living with its natural father. Yet the creation of these deadly constellations is continually aided and abetted by welfare, a $25-billion-a-year subsidy that enables women to have children by a series of men without worrying much about social or economic consequences.

When such a "serial mother" finally hooks up with a man, that man is likely to be indifferent, even hostile, to the welfare of her previous children—as testified by the "wicked stepmothers and stepfathers" that populate the fairy tales.

The Elisa Izquierdo story was a heartbreaking example of this brutal logic. Carlos Lopez, the third father in Awilda's life, seems to have been particularly resentful of Elisa, who was an interloper and nearly the same age as his own two children. He was bad enough in any case.

A month after the birth of his second child, he stabbed Awilda 17 times, putting her in the hospital. But he seems to have concentrated on Elisa. (He was the one who hung her on the shower rod.) As usually happens in such dysfunctional families, the weakest, most vulnerable member becomes the scapegoat. Awilda soon became convinced that Elisa was "possessed by the devil" and (perhaps to placate her husband) began abusing her as well.

The death of Elisa Izquierdo, then, is a tragic tale of lower-class life—the inertia of poverty, the emotional chaos of families that fail to form, the inability of people with even the best of intentions to make much of a difference. But all this is much too complex for public discourse. And so it is easier to blame "uncaring bureaucracies" and argue for more funding.

Two weeks after Elisa's death, the city's attention was riveted once again when another six-year-old girl was stabbed with a hypodermic needle by a crazed vagrant on a midtown subway platform. The public will have to wait months to see if the girl has been infected with AIDS. (Privacy laws precluded the three-time escapee from mental institutions from being tested himself.)

Probably this one will be blamed on the government's failure to provide enough sterilized needles.

William Tucker, a writer living in Brooklyn, contributed "Why We Should Decriminalize Crime" to the Nov. 27 edition of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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POTEMKIN VOLUNTEERS

by Tucker Carlson

AT THE ENTRANCE TO THAISS PARK, a carefully landscaped patch of grass, trees, and Little League fields just inside the city line of Fairfax, Virginia, stands a bright enamel sign mounted on a steel pole. "AmeriCorps Adopt-a-Spot," it announces in eye-catching letters. Below is the word "LITTER," slashed in two by a bold red stripe. The message is clear: Thanks to the efforts of AmeriCorps, the president's new program that pays young people to do public service work, this is a litter-free park.

For the people who live near Thaiss Park, the sign has been something of a mystery since it appeared late last summer. Nobody in Fairfax, it turns out, has ever seen an AmeriCorps worker in the park, much less picking up trash there. Not that there is much trash to pick up. The city's famously efficient public works department already cleans the park twice a week. Fairfax's broad assortment of neighborhood associations takes care of the rest. "If somebody breaks a beer bottle in the park, it's gone the next day" says David Murray, who lives nearby. "Littering just isn't done." It's hardly an exaggeration—the two predominant groups in the neighborhood bordering Thaiss Park are Korean immigrants and retired military officers.

Rick Kozak

So what is AmeriCorps—or, more specifically, its sign—doing in Thaiss Park? Why did the group pledge to clean up a place that is already spotless? And why did a federal program charged with rejuvenating fractured communities offer its services to one of the most organized and prosperous suburbs in the region? To hear Maria Garin, head of the local AmeriCorps office, tell it, the decision was an accident of geography. "We basically just picked the park because of the location," she says. "Most of the young people we're working with are living in this area, and it was in a good location for them to go and work." (So far the location hasn't made much difference; AmeriCorps workers still haven't visited the park.)

But there may be another explanation for the appearance of the mysterious sign: public relations. AmeriCorps is in trouble on the Hill. After enjoying a measure of bipartisan support since its inception two years ago, the program is facing mounting hostility from Republicans, which is being met by an equal amount of alarmism from the White House. (Killing the program, say administration flacks, means "preventing students from learning responsibility through community service.") For their part, the program's directors have sent word to the managers of the 1,200 local sites that garnering good publicity—that is, convincing the public that AmeriCorps provides indispensable services to neighborhoods—is now a top priority. Putting up self-congratulatory signs in affluent Washington suburbs is just part of the effort.

Early this fall, the program's governing body, the Corporation for National Service, sent 5,000 copies of the official *AmeriCorps Media Guide* to its project sites around the country. Written in easy-to-understand language, the manual makes it clear that charities that accept AmeriCorps money have an obligation to pitch in with the public-relations campaign. "Keeping local, state, and federal officials informed about how AmeriCorps is 'getting things done' in your community," it explains, "should be one of your marketing priorities."

For those who don't get the point, the guide lists ways to make certain the glories of AmeriCorps end up in print. For starters, local charities should "Announce specific AmeriCorps accomplishments." If nobody notices, "Report your accomplishments at local town council meetings." If that doesn't work, the guide advises, "Celebrate and participate in a well-known day or week," or "Link up with another publicity event in your community." To pique the interest of

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newspaper feature writers, site managers should pitch pieces profiling budding Stakhanovites on staff—"articles about particularly dedicated and effective AmeriCorps Members." Run out of news pegs? No problem: "Give an award to an AmeriCorps member or a supportive community leader." If all else fails, and your good deeds have failed to make the evening news, "Initiate a new project."

Many AmeriCorps project directors seem to have taken to heart the injunction to go forth and publicize. In its quarterly report, for instance, the AmeriCorps-funded Real Alternatives Program in San Francisco listed only one difficulty under the heading of "Primary Challenges/Problems Encountered" and it had nothing to do with helping the needy: "Media coverage has been slow at this time," the directors lamented. "We feel that we need to do more active media advocacy and program promotion." They added hopefully that "a Media Committee Speakers Bureau was set up to work in this area." The National Endowment for the Arts, which employs 60 AmeriCorps workers, preempted any such snag by hiring a New York public relations firm, the Kreisberg Group. The flacks, noted the NEA in its quarterly report, have "been helpful in the placement of stories in the greater New York metropolitan area." Other AmeriCorps projects have boasted of buying radio and television spots and taking out newspaper ads to publicize the program.

All this self-promotion can be enervating, especially for non-profit groups accustomed to spending most of their time helping actual people. "Real local charities don't even think to look for a federal grant," says John Walters, whose New Citizenship Project has studied AmeriCorps for the past year. Charities that agree to accept AmeriCorps money and workers think about it a lot.

The stock Republican swipe at AmeriCorps is that the program has been used as a political tool for the Left. There is of course some truth in the charge (an organizer for Mississippi Democrat and failed gubernatorial candidate Dick Malpus recruited volunteers at an AmeriCorps site in Jackson this fall, for instance), but liberal bias is not the real problem with AmeriCorps.

The real problem is that AmeriCorps is funded by Congress. And taking money from Congress requires charities to earn national recognition rather than simply local gratitude. Hence the media strategies and public relations firms. For many erstwhile private non-profits it is a shift in focus whose effects are just beginning to be felt. "Every time I turn around AmeriCorps is making us do something that distracts me from my work here," complains a staffer at Habitat for Humanity, a widely respected charity that recently signed on with AmeriCorps.

Meanwhile, the AmeriCorps publicity machine rolls on, sometimes more smoothly than others. Moments after explaining why she had an AmeriCorps sign placed in Fairfax's Thaiss Park, site manager Maria Garin lays down her ground rules for media interviews: "Just to let you know, before you plan on using this information or my name or the agency's name, it has to go through my executive director and my program director." Does this mean that nobody is allowed to publish the name of Garin's group without permission from the AmeriCorps directorate? "Yes," she replies, "before it is published, it has to go through our executive director."

Nice try, Maria. But it is hard to blame her for giving it a shot. After all, "Publicity," the *AmeriCorps Media Guide* advises, "is simply a means of telling people what you want them to know." ♦

After 'Balkan Ghosts'

by Robert D. Kaplan

Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History—a book I wrote in the late 1980s and completed in January 1991, months before the first shot was fired in ex-Yugoslavia—seems to have become a litmus test among the policy nomenklatura in Washington. Apparently, if you like the book, it means that you think all the groups in Bosnia are murderous, and therefore intervention is a mistake. If you hate the book, it means that you believe Bosnia has been a place of peace and harmony, and our inaction has caused the bloodshed. Journalist Elizabeth Drew even maintains that President Clinton's decision not to take forceful action in Bosnia in the spring of 1993 was at least partly due to the book's effect on him.

This is disconcerting, for two reasons. First, there is exceedingly little about Bosnia in *Balkan Ghosts*. It is a subjective, broad-brush travel book about the whole peninsula, not a policy work. Four of its nineteen chapters are specifically devoted to the former Yugoslavia. Of those, one is about Croatia, one about Serbia and Kosovo, one about Macedonia, and one about the late dissident Milovan Djilas.

That policy makers, indeed a president, might rely on such a book in reaching a momentous military

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decision would be frightening if true. More likely, I suspect, *Balkan Ghosts* supplies handy ammunition whenever inaction is the policy. Back in 1993, Clinton had so little resolve that he was casting around for any excuse not to act.

But that only highlights the second reason why it is frustrating to find *Balkan Ghosts* cast as an anti-intervention tract: I myself have been an outspoken hawk. Since the first half of 1993, I have publicly advocated "lift-and-strike," even raising the possibility of involving U.S. ground troops, on CNN and C-SPAN, in the *Washington Post* Outlook section, and in other forums. For several years at Fort Leavenworth and Carlisle Barracks, I have made the case for intervention to the U.S. Army.

And I insist that there is no contradiction between my writing a book that paints an exceptionally grim portrait of group relations in the Balkan peninsula as a whole—and my urging intervention to stabilize a part of that peninsula. Here's why.

A background of ethnic strife, no matter how awful, does not by itself cause hundreds of thousands of deaths, in conditions that resemble the Holocaust, a few hours from Vienna. For that, one needs an additional factor: a power vacuum created by Western confusion and inaction.

In particular, the argument over whether the Bosnians are historically a peaceful people is a false one. Distinguished writers make a strong case for a tradition of good intergroup relations, especially in cities like Sarajevo. But this ethnic harmony has often been balanced on a knife's edge. In the short story "A Letter from 1920," Yugoslav Nobel laureate Ivo Andric writes about an invisible border between love and hate in Bosnia, and how beneath "so much tenderness and loving passion" sometimes lie "entire hurricanes of tethered and compressed hatreds maturing and awaiting their hour." Moreover, one must acknowledge not only the peaceful intercommunal tradition present through much of Bosnian history but also the strife there since 1992 (and between 1941 and 1945). Neither Martians nor President Clinton nor even Lord Owen killed Bosnian Muslims. Other Bosnians did.

But then, so what? So what if the Balkans are a confused, often violent ethnic cauldron? Welcome to much of the world. This doesn't mean you crawl into an isolationist cocoon. You insert troops where overwhelming moral considerations crosshatch with strategic ones, regardless of the character of the local people. What happens in Bosnia will directly influence what happens in Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, and Turkey: places that in some cases have tottering governments and high unemployment, not to mention heavy alcoholism, and in other cases have defense agreements with the United States and are bristling with sophisticated weaponry. Further afield, what happens in Bosnia will significantly, albeit indirectly, affect politics in the rest of Europe, in Russia, and even in Syria, whose president, an aging Don Corleone, has always tended to be more accommodating when the United States successfully projects power in contiguous regions.

Finally, even if you accept the notion that the Bosnians are not as angelic as some of their defenders claim, they still have more going for them than most people in the Third World. Bosnia has high literacy rates, low birthrates, and a memory of bourgeois existence before Tito. There is a bedrock social stability to return to in Bosnia that does not obtain in, say, Somalia or Haiti. The real success story would be to bring Haiti up to the level of Bosnia in a few decades (as I argued 20 months ago in the *Washington Post*).

Ethnic hatred or no, the key to Yugoslavia's collapse is economic. I was in Yugoslavia every year from 1981 though 1989. Each time I went back, the country was poorer. The economy was in a non-stop deceleration, partly due to the crackpot protectionism of Tito's communism-lite: If one ethnic republic had a certain type of factory, the other republics had to have one, even if it was not necessary. Without this economic malaise, the entire atmosphere in the country would have been different.

The president's new policy, of course, has problems. The agreement it implements is less like peace than divorce. While we push a rhetoric of multiethnic tolerance around the world, our troops in our most high-profile overseas operation will be apartheid cops. The Pentagon keeps saying that the troops will merely enforce the lines of separation.

Well, those lines are based on brutally established ethnic divisions. Moreover, our success will depend on Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's ability further to consolidate his autocratic control over Greater Serbia, so that Bosnian Serbs don't make trouble and renegade Serb militia units don't go crazy in Kosovo and Macedonia, leading to Albanian uprisings. Clinton now needs Milosevic, who is the century's most successful war criminal because he has gotten away with his crimes.

To lead, though, is to choose. Any alternative to sending troops at this point is worse, for reasons publicly established. The president, for me, has emerged as a *real* president. Not to support him on Bosnia is to cower in isolationism and watch NATO disintegrate.

Robert D. Kaplan, a contributing editor of the* Atlantic Monthly, *is the author of* The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century *(forthcoming, Random House).

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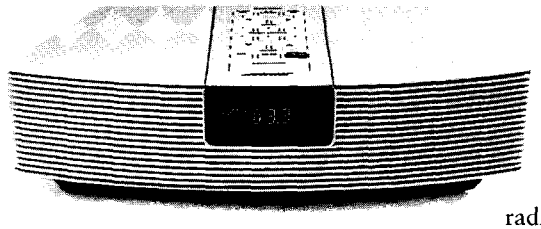

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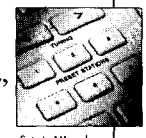

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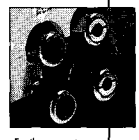

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LEVIATHAN IN THE SUBURBS

By Clint Bolick

A new buzzword dominates the Washington political lexicon these days: devolution. It offers a one-size-fits-all solution to vexing issues ranging from welfare to health care to education: Pack it up and ship it to the states and localities.

Republicans who have caught devolution fever ought to pause long enough to cast a southward glance across the Potomac to the city of Alexandria, Virginia. There they will find that despite their best intentions big government is not disappearing; it's merely moving to the suburbs.

In many respects, Alexandria represents the ideal of a modern suburb. Located only a silver dollar's throw from Washington, the 16-square-mile city is tidy and prosperous. Its 116,000 residents are ethnically diverse—64 percent white, 22 percent black, 10 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian—and boast a per capita income of over $34,000, nearly twice the national average. The median home value is $228,000. The historic Old Town section, where I live, is one of the area's most picturesque neighborhoods and a popular tourist destination.

"If you're looking for a people's republic, you won't find it here," Assistant City Manager Tom Brannan assured me. True, Alexandria isn't one of those screeching left-wing cities like Berkeley or Santa Monica that enact their own foreign policies and gouge landlords with confiscatory rent control. As cities go, this one is relatively well managed, one of only 15 nationwide to boast AAA bond ratings from both of Wall Street's major credit agencies.

And yet the city is a "liberal fiefdom," charges columnist and Alexandria resident Cal Thomas, "one of the last bastions of liberalism in government." The city's government is bloated, expensive, intrusive, involved in far too many functions—and in all this, typical of local governments across America.

The premise underlying devolution—calling to mind nostalgic memories of small-town democracy—is that local government is closer to the people, more responsive, and less intrusive. But the premise is a myth, and perhaps it was ever so. Even a century and a half ago, Alexis de Tocqueville commented on the "exasperating interference in a multitude of minute details" in which local governments engage, wherein "tastes as well as actions are to be regulated."

Tocqueville couldn't have known it then, but he was presciently depicting the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review, whose exasperating interference in matters of personal taste is the stuff of local legend. The board has jurisdiction over all new construction and exterior renovations that are visible to the public in the historic district, no matter how trivial. One current controversy pits a homeowner who wants to replace a wrought-iron gate with a wooden one against activists from the Old Town Civic Association who complain they no longer will be able to peer into his front yard.

The process to secure from the Board of Architectural Review a "Certificate of Appropriateness" is tedious and oppressive. An application must be filed along with a $30 fee, which triggers a public hearing. The property owner must notify neighbors of their right to object, and notice of the public hearing is posted on the property and in local newspapers. All applications are referred to the city archaeologist, the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, Code Enforcement, the Zoning Department, and the Office of Historic Alexandria for conformance to their regulations.

Following the public hearing, the board may approve or deny the application or defer it for restudy. The board's discretion is bounded only by the city council, which has the power to review denials. (Civic-minded Alexandrians get to watch these festivities on the local cable channel.) The reward for most property owners who manage to secure a Certificate of Appropriateness is the chance to start yet another administrative process, this time for a building permit.

Clint Bolick is litigation director for the Institute for Justice in Washington, D.C., and the author of Grassroots Tyranny.

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All this recently proved too much for a young Old Town couple who had the temerity to build a gazebo and hot tub in their backyard without obtaining permission. An alert local bureaucrat happened to notice the structure from the street and reported it to the city, which commenced proceedings against the couple. Forced to hire a lawyer and endure endless hearings, the couple ultimately was ordered to take the gazebo down. Eventually the city acknowledged it had made an error and decided to permit the gazebo, but only after the couple had sold the house and fled to Fairfax County. Former neighbor John McCaslin recalls, "They couldn't wait to get the hell out of there."

Is the Board of Architectural Review too heavy-handed? "Sometimes it does go a little too far," acknowledges Vice-Mayor Kerry Donley. On the other hand, he adds, "George Washington didn't have a hot tub, when you come right down to it."

In this hopelessly overgoverned city, the Board of Architectural Review is only one of 74 boards, commissions, committees, task forces, and authorities, ranging from the Human Rights Commission to the Commission for the Arts, the Commission for Women, and the Waterfront Committee. Not all have regulatory authority, but many do.

Hidden enclaves within the bureaucracy wield noteworthy discretion as well. Even the city arborist, with a staff of five full-time employees who tend and regulate trees, can wreak havoc with property owners. "Any development within the city must proceed according to a plan," offers city arborist Joe Noelle. "There are always certain requirements which must be met."

Indeed, despite the assertion in its business license handbook, "The City of Alexandria Welcomes Your Business," it is nearly as costly and difficult to own and operate a business as it is to own and enjoy property. William Cleveland, the only Republican on the six-member city council and architect of the city's enterprise zone, acknowledges that "some rules do preclude small businesses from coming into Alexandria."

That's an understatement. Even before starting a business, the owner must register it; obtain certificates of use and occupancy (and, if the business is operated in Old Town, a certificate of appropriateness); secure a business license and pay the requisite fee; and seek some or all of 11 other permits ranging from building to electrical to hydrants to parking.

Businesses are subject to local real estate, business, personal property, utility, meal sales, and transient lodging taxes. They also must comply with the city's human rights ordinance and its 20 pages of implementing regulations, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and numerous other bases and require companies contracting with the city to adopt affirmative action goals and timetables.

The business license code, which is being overhauled in conformance with model state legislation, is a sight to behold. It subjects literally hundreds of business activities, even plant sitting and window cleaning, to business license and fee requirements. Anyone operating a business without a license is subject to a fine of $500 per day. Some categories are reserved for specially harsh treatment: "Every fortuneteller, clairvoyant, phrenologist, spirit medium, chiromancer, astrologist, hypnotist or palmist operating in the city shall pay for the privilege an annual license tax of $1,000, and this license tax shall not be prorated."

With all these regulations it is little surprise that businesses in Alexandria fail at an alarming rate. When Old Town's Henry Africa restaurant closed its doors after 17 years in 1993, owner Marlene Radford posted on the vacant storefront windows a scathing bill of particulars. "Take a look at your city officials," the poster-sized placards proclaimed. "It has become clear to me . . . they act as close-minded, short-sighted bureaucrats who make poorly timed, poorly communicated and half-thought-out decisions that adversely affect the businesses and private citizens of Old Town."

While Alexandria is hard on private-sector businesses, it runs plenty of its own. The city operates four medical facilities, a Center for Employment Training, seven full-time recreation centers, the Torpedo Factory art center, a bus system, a 65-bed homeless shelter, and 3,681 units of subsidized and public housing.

Over all this presides City Manager Vola Lawson, a 25-year city employee who not only prepares the budget and administers city functions, but also, as president of the Alexandria Transit Company, literally makes sure the buses run on time. Not necessarily profitably: The bus system derives less than half its operating revenue from rider fares. Far more than the part-time city council, it is Lawson who runs the city.

All this government costs lots of money, $300 million in fiscal year 1996 (up from $282 million last year). The city derives its local revenue primarily from real estate taxes, fees, and a steep annual tax on personal property (mainly cars), 4.75 percent of assessed value. Not surprisingly, the city is always looking for new revenue, whether through real estate development exactions, property reassessments, or parking fines.

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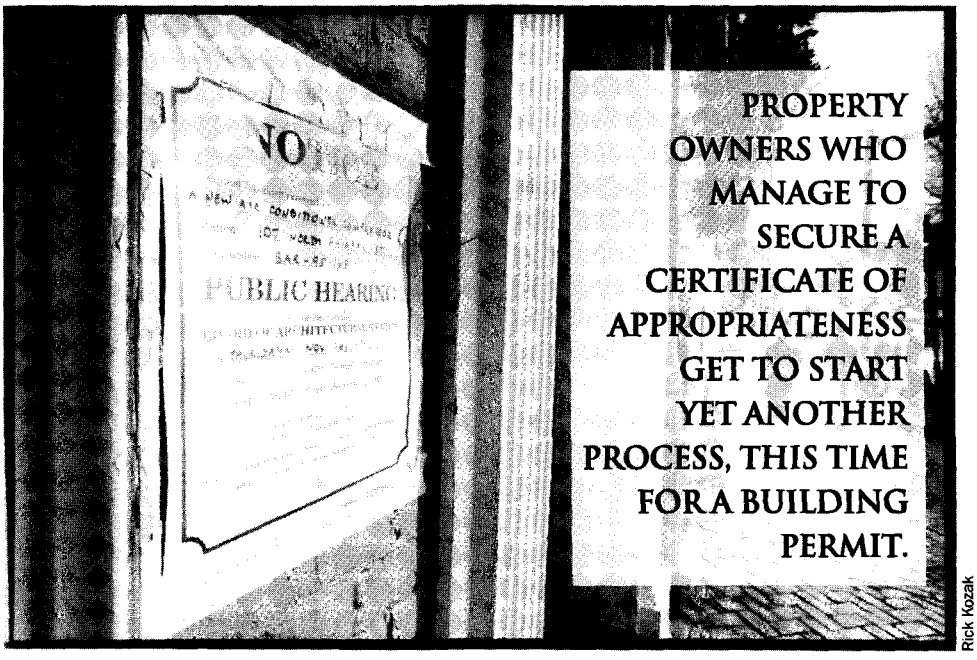

PROPERTY OWNERS WHO MANAGE TO SECURE A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS GET TO START YET ANOTHER PROCESS, THIS TIME FOR A BUILDING PERMIT.

Rick Kozak

The city likes to boast of its stable property tax rate, but appearances are deceiving. "It sounds good until you've found they've doubled your assessed value," observes Cal Thomas. Case in point, he recently moved into a new townhouse before the surrounding development was completed. The following year, with the development finished, the city raised the valuation of his lot by $100,000. Given a property tax rate of $1.07 per $100 valuation, this tidy bookkeeping maneuver cost Thomas nearly $1,100 a year in extra taxes with no increase in services.

Thomas hired a lawyer and has challenged the assessment through two levels of appeal, so far to no avail—despite evidence that the city is assessing houses in the development $200,000 over true market value. The assessment scheme is an "outrageous assault on the earned income of citizens," Thomas charges. "They need your dough, and they'll find a way to get it."

The focus on revenue rankles long-time resident McCaslin. Voicing concerns to city officials over a sudden rise in crime in his Old Town neighborhood—eight armed holdups occurred in a recent one-week period—McCaslin was advised to start a Neighborhood Watch program. That's fine, McCaslin says, but what about police priorities? "In their drive to get revenues," he observes, "they have people ticketing cars all day, instead of having police officers driving around."

Like most cities, Alexandria spends the largest share of its budget on schools: in fiscal year 1996, $96 million, nearly one-third of its budget. This amounts to a whopping $10,139 per student, which is twice the national average and nearly as much as the area's most elite private schools.

Yet the system delivers mediocre results: Children in the city's schools rank from the 42nd to the 67th percentile in basic skills for grades 3-8 and from the 39th to the 58th percentile for high school. Not surprisingly, many of the city's more affluent families are abandoning the public schools or moving away.

Why then the exorbitant cost? In Alexandria, more than half the school system's employees are non-teaching personnel, while in neighboring Arlington and Fairfax counties the share is around 40 percent. This echoes a national trend: Between 1980 and 1992, the number of public school teachers declined by 2 percent, but the number of bureaucrats climbed 17 percent, absorbing an ever-increasing share of public school budgets.

As in most cities, the demand in Alexandria is for more government, not less. More than most, Alexandria is a city by bureaucrats for bureaucrats. Even though Mayor Patsy Ticer insists that "local government here has not grown," its payroll continues to balloon, rising from 3,465 in 1993 to 3,770 today, a nearly 10 percent increase over two years despite minimal population growth. Not counting school personnel, Alexandria employs 175 people per 10,000 population, a ratio higher than the bloated bureaucracies of Chicago (148 per 10,000) and Los Angeles (140) and nearly twice as many as San Diego (93). City government is the second largest employer in Alexandria, after only the Defense Department (11,437 employees), and employs twice as many people as the city's largest private employer.

This too follows a national pattern: State and local government is growing. Since 1980, the share of all civilian government personnel employed by state and local governments increased from 82 to 84 percent. In other words, the state and local governments are five times larger than the civilian federal government, and the gap is widening. Between 1980 and 1992, the number of federal civilian employees climbed about 3 per-

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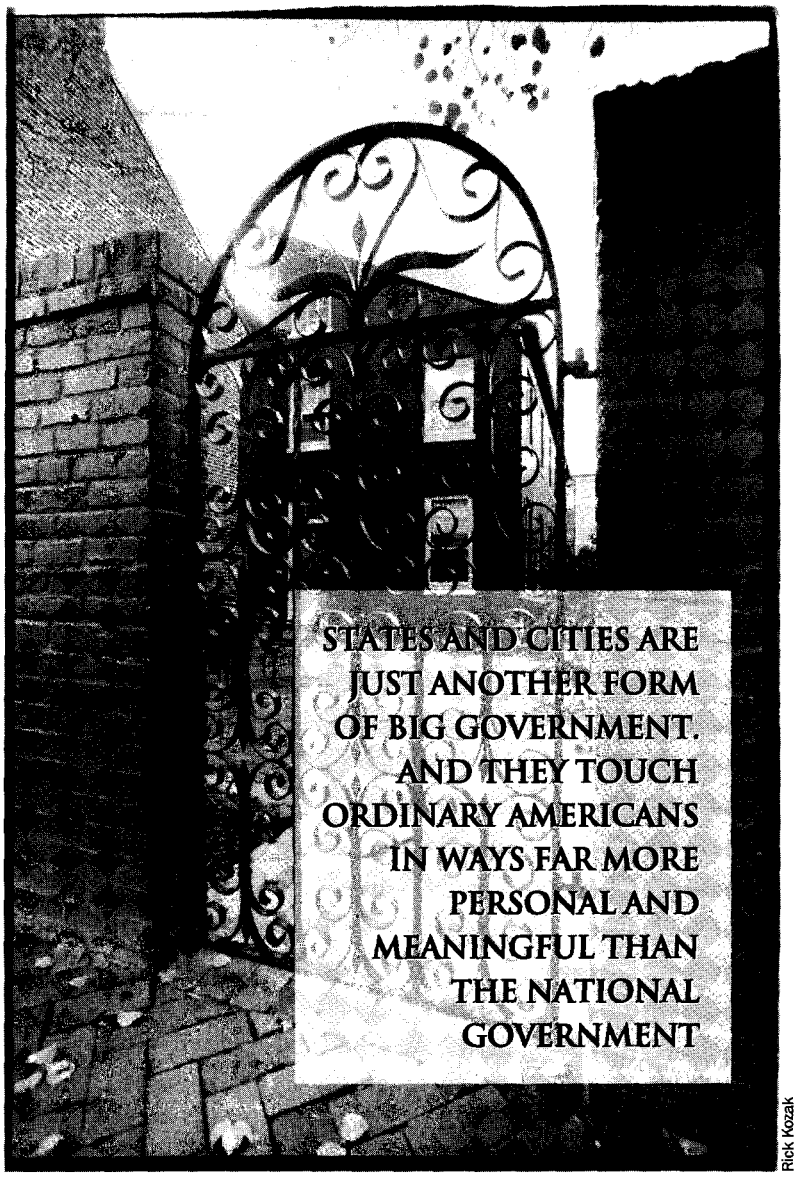

Rick Kozak

cent, to 3 million, while the number employed by local governments grew nearly 16 percent, to 11.1 million; and local government debt nearly tripled, to $599 billion.

Even local officials are wary of the challenges of devolution. "No, we're not excited about receiving all those new functions," concedes Ticer, an unrepentant liberal who in November cost Republicans control of the Virginia state senate by unseating an incumbent. Vice-Mayor Donley, who will become interim mayor, expands upon this point: "The notion of devolution is not merely a shift of responsibility but of tax burden financed mainly through regressive forms of taxation." Since local governments possess limited tax options—mainly taxing property and businesses—the cost of added functions will fall on the shoulders of homeowners and consumers.

But the far more ominous threat posed by giving state and local governments greater power is their propensity toward grassroots tyranny. "Devolution to the states?" asked Bob Woodson of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise at a recent meeting on empowerment. "The states are the problem! Most of the regulations and barriers that our activists face are at the state and local level."

A recurrent issue is special-interest influence at the local level, whether through public-employee and teachers unions—much more influential than their national counterparts—or through cause-oriented groups. Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda understood this in the 1980s when they organized the Campaign for Economic Democracy, which turned several California cities into laboratories for wealth redistribution. In England, Margaret Thatcher relentlessly attacked local councils as bastions of socialism that stood in the way of her campaign to restore individual sovereignty.

The point many conservatives miss in their zeal for devolution is that states and cities are just another form of big government. And they touch ordinary Americans in ways far more personal and meaningful than the national government. In the sometimes mischievous, sometimes malign ways it exercises its sweeping powers over education, business, taxation, and private property, Alexandria exemplifies contemporary city government.

City Manager Vola Lawson—unelected and largely unknown to ordinary citizens—has a greater day-to-day impact on the lives of Alexandrians than does Bill Clinton.

If all the congressional Republican majority accomplishes is the transfer of power from one set of bureaucrats to another, in the end it will have effectuated little fundamental change. A real devolution revolution will empower individuals and the communities they choose to organize, not local fiefdoms. ♦

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THE VINDICATION OF CHRISTINA JEFFREY

By Elena Neuman

On Nov. 30, something virtually unprecedented happened in Washington: Before a battery of cameras, an elected official publicly apologized to one of his former staffers for her wrongful firing. And so, House-historian-for-a-week Christina Jeffrey, the notorious Nazi, anti-Semite, racist, and Holocaust revisionist, hired on Jan. 3 of this year by Newt Gingrich and fired six days later by Newt Gingrich, finds herself in an unusual position for a Beltway victim: vindicated.

Standing in a crowded hallway outside his office with Jeffrey by his side, Gingrich told assembled reporters that he took "full responsibility" for not supporting Jeffrey in the throes of a media "feeding frenzy" and acknowledged that her "personal name and her professional career had been smeared." He pledged to find future employment for Jeffrey as a consultant to the House of Representatives.

Democratic Rep. John Lewis, a one-time Jeffrey critic, met with her the following day to make amends and pledged his support in further efforts to clear her name. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who had praised Gingrich for acting so quickly to rid himself of Jeffrey in January, also proclaimed remorse at the press conference: "There was an atmosphere of 'Gotcha,'" he said. Jeffrey should not be "criticized for the rest of her life" for poorly chosen remarks made years ago.

But even as Gingrich and others were trying to make amends to Jeffrey, others in Washington, notably some of the most partisan Jewish Democrats, refused to back down on their earlier comments, presumably because attacking Jeffrey is still politically expedient in some quarters. "Congressman [Charles] Schumer stands by his earlier statements," said his press secretary, Josh Isay. "The views that [Jeffrey] expressed were an insult to Holocaust survivors." Barney Frank, who had previously called Jeffrey's views "wacko," also reiterated his January outrage: "I thought and continue to think that her views on the Holocaust were weird. I thought her denigration of the teaching of the Holocaust was a terrible mistake."

And what exactly were the Kennesaw State College political scientist's "insulting" and "weird" views that caused all the controversy? *L'affaire Jeffrey* traces its origin to 1986, when the Reagan administration's Department of Education asked Jeffrey, then an associate professor at Troy College in Alabama, to review a $70,000 grant application for a controversial middle-school ethics program called *Facing History and Ourselves*.

The 15 lay evaluators of the program were given an eight-page confidential questionnaire to facilitate their review of the program, with instructions to focus on the extent to which "excellence, balance, and imagination" were demonstrated in the program's proposed activities. Jeffrey's most quoted offense was her answer to the second question: whether the program's activities would be likely to accomplish the project's objectives. "The project itself lacks balance," wrote Jeffrey. "Will former Nazis, etc., be asked to speak?"

She also wrote, in response to a question about the program's "impact on the students," that its methods were "intrusive" and, again, "unbalanced." She continued: "It is a paradoxical and strange aspect of this program [that] the method used to change the thinking of students is the same that Hitler and Goebbels used to propagandize the German people. This reeducation method was perfected by Chairman Mao and now is being foisted on American children under the guise of 'understanding' history."

In her "overall assessment" of the program, Jeffrey reiterated and expanded upon her previous remarks: "First of all, the entire program strikes me as mass reality avoidance. We can't deal with today's problems, so let's solve yesterday's. We had rather focus on the shortcomings of Hitler and the Germans, than on our own. . . . I have grave reservations about this type of program for junior high students."

In conclusion, Jeffrey pointed out that "the program gives no evidence of balance or objectivity. The Nazi point of view, however unpopular, is still a point of view, and it is not presented, nor is that of the Ku Klux Klan. The selection of only two problem areas,

Elena Neuman is a free-lance writer living in Washington. Her piece, "Harvard's Sins of Admission," appeared in the Oct. 9 issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Germany and Armenia, leaves out many others, many of which are more recent. I am thinking of the U.S.S.R., Afghanistan, Cambodia and Ethiopia, among others. No explanation of this selectivity is given. My impression is that this program . . . may be appropriate for a limited religious audience, but not for widespread distribution to the schools of the nation."

Jeffrey now says her review was written in a tone of sarcasm. She maintains that her query about asking former Nazis to speak was intended as a parody of the moral relativism she saw as an inherent flaw in the *Facing History* program itself. As for her stress on the program's lack of "balance," she now recognizes that her use of the word painted her as a moral relativist—exactly what she was criticizing the program for. "I used the word because I was specifically instructed to analyze the program in terms of balance. It was very unfortunate. I never meant that the Nazi point of view was legitimate—just that you cannot understand what happened during the Holocaust without understanding the origins of the Nazi ideology."

In the funding proposal—not the official *Facing History Resource Book* for teachers as it appeared in 1986, or as it appears now—that she was reading, lacking were any references to the German philosophical origins of National Socialism, the history of the Weimar Republic, or the history of European Jewry prior to the Holocaust. Such background was, in fact, included at length in the *Facing History Resource Book*, and it has been expanded since then.

Moreover, her dissatisfaction with the program was based more on its liberal agenda and morally neutral "values clarification" approach than its Holocaust content. Specifically, she objected to the program's use of historical comparisons, such as the lynching of southern blacks by the Ku Klux Klan, the My Lai massacre, and nuclear war as similar examples of genocide. "It demeans and exploits the Holocaust," asserts Jeffrey. "Let's teach the Holocaust to these kids as history. That Nazism, genocide and the Holocaust are evil is indisputable—how do you 'values clarify' genocide? This kind of approach is dangerous."

By referring to Mao and Goebbels she was, she says, giving sarcastic voice to conservative outrage at the way liberal indoctrination had seeped into a program allegedly about the evil of the Holocaust. Still, despite her considerable misgivings, Jeffrey awarded *Facing History* a passing grade of 61, the highest score given by any of the 15 evaluators. With such lackluster support, *Facing History* was denied department funding that year and in two succeeding years.

The issue lay dormant until 1988, when the late Democratic Rep. Ted Weiss convened a House subcommittee hearing to investigate "The Department of Education's Refusal to Fund Holocaust Curriculum." Trumpeting his status as a son of Holocaust refugees, Weiss charged that a bevy of conservative reviewers, interest groups, and Holocaust deniers had hijacked the *Facing History* funding. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Department released the list of grant reviewers, but not the confidential reviews. Even so, within days a copy of Jeffrey's evaluation was leaked to the press by someone within the Education department. It soon became a focal point of the subcommittee hearings and was entered into the official record.

Jeffrey, who only learned of the hearing after seeing her name bandied about in press reports, sought to enter a written defense into the official congressional record. Her request was denied. The hearing concluded that *Facing History* had been unfairly denied funding. Shirley Currey, the Education department official responsible for selecting reviewers of the *Facing History* grant proposal, was fired. Jeffrey did, however, receive an official letter of apology for the leak of her review from assistant secretary of Education Patricia Hines: "To the extent that any Department of Education official has characterized [Jeffrey] herself as racist or anti-Semitic, we do indeed apologize."

With this, the issue faded into history and Jeffrey went back to teaching without any apparent ill consequences from her first 15 minutes of fame. She was offered a professorship in political science, and eventually tenure, at Kennesaw State College near Atlanta. "Everyone knew about Christina's experience in Washington; the issue was raised when she first came to Kennesaw," remembers Craig Aronoff, professor of private enterprise at Kennesaw's business school. "But we were satisfied by the way she explained her comments and put them in context. She's not an anti-Semite or a Holocaust revisionist. Anybody who knows her knows she's not."

Shortly after her move to Georgia in 1987, Jeffrey made the acquaintance of her new congressman and academic colleague, Newt Gingrich, who was teaching his college course, "Renewing American Civilization," at Kennesaw. Already a vocal conservative, a former member of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, Jeffrey established an immediate rapport with Gingrich. She recommended her students for internships in his district office and defended the congressman when her colleagues at Kennesaw objected to his teaching a "partisan" course at the public college.

Given their relationship, some Gingrich-watchers

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expected her to be named to his expanded personal staff when he became speaker. Instead, when Gingrich fired long-standing House historian Raymond Smock in mid-December, he quickly called Jeffrey to offer her the job.

In retrospect, Jeffrey's biggest mistake, at least by Beltway standards, may be that she didn't remind Gingrich of her controversial past and its public record. Surely, as a political scientist who had already lived through one such episode in Washington, she must have realized that she could become a lightning rod for Gingrich, who was up to his ears in controversy over his lucrative book deal.

In her defense, Jeffrey says she assumed that anyone who served in Congress in 1988, or had a staff worth its weight, would have known about the Weiss hearings and the *Facing History* imbroglio. Jeffrey also asserts that she did raise the issue, at least tangentially, to Tony Blankley, Gingrich's press secretary, by referring to herself as a "junior Ollie North." Perhaps this was a little too subtle. Blankley has repeatedly denied that either he or his boss was aware of Jeffrey's past statements. In fact, at the height of the media blitz, Blankley declared, in a letter to the *Washington Post*, that had he known about her prior remarks, he would have "leaped out of my chair and blocked any such person from being appointed to anything." Not to worry; there were Democrats aplenty willing to do just that when news of the eight-year-old comments broke again in the press and reverberated throughout Capitol Hill.

Kent Lemon

Christina Jeffrey

On Jan. 9, White House aide George Stephanopoulos alerted reporters to the existence of the 1988 hearings and the *Washington Post*'s coverage of them. Reps. Frank, Schumer, and Nita Lowey, among others, quickly went on the offensive, seizing an opportunity to score hometown points while assaulting Gingrich. By 10 p.m., Jeffrey learned through an Associated Press reporter that she had been fired. At midnight, she received a call from Gingrich informing her that she would have to resign. She never tendered a letter of resignation and to this day asserts that she was fired. For six weeks, Gingrich refused to return her phone calls.

Jeffrey was called a "Nazi sympathizer" on the floor of the House, and members of the media quickly turned what were originally described as "weird," "offensive," and "extreme" views into a brutally personal, ad hominem attack. "Anyone who thinks that way is an unreconstructed anti-Semite," wrote Raymond Sokolov in the Jan. 13 *Wall Street Journal*, in an article that branded Jeffrey a "Yahoo"—a hairy, uncouth lout portrayed in *Gulliver's Travels*. "It is one thing to hate Jews. Any moral dwarf can do that. But it takes an especially ignorant and fact resistant sort of historian to believe that there is a viable Nazi point of view on the subject." Richard Cohen, writing in his Jan. 12 *Washington Post* column, simply called Jeffrey a "jerk." "The Holocaust is over, but hate endures," he said.

And officially sealing Jeffrey's transformation from insensitive reviewer to anti-Semitic Yahoo was Tony Blankley's own statement in the *Washington Post*. When asked on Jan. 12 if he accepted Jeffrey's protestations that she was not anti-Semitic, Blankley responded that the voluble speaker had "no comment." Throughout Washington, Gingrich was commended for the swiftness of his dismissal (the comparison with Clinton's bungled nominations was lost on no one) even as he was criticized for cronyism and poor judgment in hiring Jeffrey to begin with.

On Jan. 28, less than a month after arriving in Washington and moving into their new home, the Jeffreys repacked their U-Haul, bundled up two kids and cars, and returned to Georgia, where both eventually resumed their academic careers. Not only had Christina's reputation been savaged, but they were now $30,000 in debt from their two moves, lost income, and rent.

"No one was interested in either taking a close look at what she really said, or putting it in context," says Kennesaw's Craig Aronoff. "They preferred instead to

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use an inference to do what they could to get Newt Gingrich. That's the whole story. There is no more to it. It has nothing to do with Christina and what she is or what she's not."

Jeffrey, it bears reiterating, was not alone in her misgivings about the *Facing History* program, although her choice of words was the most memorable. Two prominent Holocaust historians independently voiced many of the same reservations about the "values clarification" program. Writing in *Commentary* in 1990, the late Lucy Dawidowicz criticized *Facing History* as a "vehicle for instructing thirteen-year-olds in civil disobedience and indoctrinating them with propaganda for nuclear disarmament," all in the guise of teaching the Holocaust. In the program, obedience to authority and conformity to legal mandates are associated with injustice and totalitarianism; resistance, protest, and following the dictates of conscience are encouraged. Dawidowicz, the most distinguished American historian of the Holocaust, excoriated the program's transparent "activist agenda" in its offer to make available to teachers and students a list of groups dealing with "issues of the nuclear world of today." Dawidowicz's chastisement may have been responsible for the removal of the nuclear disarmament chapter from the current, revised edition of *Facing History*.

More recently, Emory University religion professor Deborah Lipstadt agreed with a number of Jeffrey's basic criticisms of the *Facing History* program, even as she denounced Jeffrey's terminology. "My discomfort has less to do with the way the Holocaust is approached and more with the context into which it is placed," Lipstadt wrote in the March 6 *New Republic*. At the end of each chapter of the *Facing History Resource Book* for teachers is a section called "Connections," which includes references to present-day racism and violence in an effort to make the Holocaust experience for American students more directly relevant. "The problem with this approach is that it elides the differences between the Holocaust and all manner of inhumanities and injustices," Lipstadt wrote. "No teacher using this material can help but draw the historically fallacious parallel between Weimar Germany and contemporary America."

The edition that Jeffrey reviewed linked the Holocaust with Hiroshima, and mass murders in Armenia (the list has since been expanded to include Rwanda, Tibet, Laos, and Cambodia). As Lipstadt points out, these examples are all horrific tragedies, but are markedly different from the Nazi efforts to wipe out an entire people: "There are important distinctions to be made, and *Facing History and Ourselves*, in its ambitious attempt to engage in moral education by teaching about the Holocaust, at times obscures more than it reveals."

To its credit, the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation has removed some of these controversial comparisons and allusions from its revised edition—a 564-page tome replete with exhaustive documentary evidence, background material, and historical context that has earned praise from Holocaust experts like Michael Berenbaum of the U.S. Holocaust Museum Research Institute and Lawrence Langer of Simmons College. Nonetheless, the relativistic and values-centered approach the program employs continues to inspire debate throughout the field of Holocaust studies.

"I think that any Holocaust survivor, or relative of a Holocaust survivor, as I am, would look at the way they were trying to make an analogy between genocide in Nazi Germany and civil rights violations in the United States, and be not only astounded but offended," says Barry Friedman, an associate professor of political science at North Georgia State College and a staunch ally of Jeffrey's throughout her ordeal. "Christina was responding to that. No one who's ever worked with her has ever seen or perceived any possibility of a taint of anti-Semitism or racism. All it would have taken was a little investigation on Congressman Schumer's part, a little research before everyone jumped to smear her. That he hasn't retracted his statements, now, 10 months later is shameful."

In the end, Jeffrey will probably be remembered in Washington, if at all, as the House historian who either was or was not a bigot, but who was run out of town before anyone had time to find out. Christina Jeffrey's choice of words in a federal academic review may well have disqualified her as a sensible candidate for public service; after all, public service requires discretion and sensitivity, qualities that her misplaced sarcasm and penchant for overstatement suggest Jeffrey might be lacking.

That notwithstanding, the Jeffrey affair is not so much about Christina Jeffrey's questionable choice of words, the Holocaust, or the *Facing History and Ourselves* program. It is merely another example of the viciousness of inside-the-Beltway politics as usual. The difference is that this time, the victim's determined efforts—an all-out letter-writing and lobbying campaign—over the past ten months to clear her name have paid off. Jeffrey, unlike most others who have come to Washington only to be pushed off the gangplank for the sake of political expediency, has been offered a public apology. ♦

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Is 'Conservative Revolution' An Oxymoron?

By Gertrude Himmelfarb

Budget reform, welfare reform, Medicare reform—this formidable combination of reforms has been proudly heralded by a new breed of conservatives as a "conservative revolution." Yet an old-fashioned conservative may find that label disquieting. Surely it is a contradiction in terms. Surely conservatives are meant to conserve, not to revolt—to conserve by a series of prudent, gradual, incremental accommodations to reality, not by any radical, precipitous change.

That is how conservatives have traditionally thought of themselves, and how some conservatives still do. For the traditional conservative, all change corrupts and radical change corrupts absolutely. Radical change is all the more repugnant because it is in the service of an idea, an idea so compelling as to warrant so radical a change. This too is anathema to the traditional conservative, who is as wary of ideas as of change.

The classical formulation of this view is by the English political philosopher Michael Oakeshott, whose memorable article, "On Being Conservative," defined conservatism as a matter of "disposition" rather than "doctrine"—a disposition that takes "delight in what is present rather than what was or what may be." And it delights in the present not because the present corresponds to some idea or ideal that is esteemed, not even because it is better than what was or what may be, but simply because it *is*—because it is known and familiar, and therefore congenial to the conservative temperament.

Recently this view has been provocatively advanced in the London *Spectator* by Owen Harries, who takes it as a vindication of Bob Dole. Dole commends himself to Harries not, as others would argue, because he is the best of an uninspired field of candidates, but rather because he is the only true conservative among them. Where some conservatives complain of Dole's lack of principle and conviction, a cynicism and pragmatism that regards everything as negotiable (Harries cites Dole's willingness to "do" a Ronald Reagan if that is what people want), Harries finds in him an "irony" that is the mark of a true conservative.

If this urbane and witty endorsement of Dole sounds equivocal, there is nothing equivocal in the implied criticism of Newt Gingrich and the other enthusiasts in the new Congress, nor in the distaste for the "Religious Right" and the "Movement Conservatives" who would carry the "conservative revolution" even further than Gingrich might like.

Harries does not quote Oakeshott in this connection. Instead he cites a very thoughtful article by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," to the same effect. Huntington disputes the ideological conception of conservatism, the idea that conservatism reflects a "political vision." He reasons that an ideology, he says, is called for only when radical change is desired, which is precisely what conservativism rejects, intent as it is upon essentially maintaining the existing order. "No ideational theory," Huntington explains, "can be used to defend established institutions satisfactorily, even when those institutions in general reflect the values of that ideology."

Huntington's essay was written in 1957; Oakeshott's in 1956. A decade later no conservative could have written so sanguinely about the viability, let alone defensibility, of "established institutions." For these established institutions were decisively *dis*established, first by the counterculture and then by the Great Society, both the products of the tumultuous—and revolutionary, a conservative might say—decade of the 1960s. By now, the nature of our institutions has been so radically altered that we find ourselves in a society few conservatives can tolerate, let alone "delight in."

What is a conservative to do—a conservative by "disposition"—confronted with a revolution so firmly established that it is now the status quo? This revolution may be quantifiably measured: In these three decades the illegitimacy rate has increased sixfold, crime fivefold, unmarried couples sevenfold, one-parent families threefold, families headed by a never-mar-

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ried mother twelvefold. And so with statistics of welfare dependency, illiteracy, drug addiction, and the other symptoms of an all too common "social pathology." This social pathology is most conspicuous, of course, in the underclass, but the rest of society is by no means immune to it. The black illegitimacy rate in 1965, presaging the breakdown of the black family, is very nearly the white illegitimacy rate in 1995.

But this social pathology is only a small part of the story. The revolution in social sensibility is no less dramatic. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan has observed, we have so succeeded in "defining deviancy down" that what was once regarded as abnormal has by now been normalized, and what was once stigmatized as deviant is now tolerated and even sanctioned. "Illegitimacy" itself has been officially rebaptized: It is now an "alternative mode of parenting" or "non-marital childbearing," terminology that rhetorically legitimizes what was once illegitimate.

By the same token, institutions that were born only yesterday, in the aftermath of the Great Society, are now regarded as so venerable as to defy retrenchment, let alone abolition. Thus, the proposal to reduce the budgets of the endowments for the arts and humanities, which have grown from less than $6 million a year each when they were founded in 1966 to $172 million each in 1995, is said to be tantamount to abolishing the arts and humanities themselves—arts and humanities which were, in fact, in a flourishing state before the creation of the endowments. In this hothouse atmosphere, any program boasting even a five-year vintage is seen as an integral and inviolable part of our social system, a moral and legal "entitlement."

This is the situation that faces conservatives today: an entrenched revolution that cannot be significantly affected by the small, incremental changes a conservative would prefer. Nibbling away at the edges of this or that program, or cutting the budget of this or that agency, is little more than an invitation to restore that cut the following year and to devise yet another "initiative" to warrant the continuance of the agency. More important, the failure to challenge the legitimacy of the revolution itself is, in effect, to legitimize it, to give the revolution the moral sanction that ensures its perpetuation.

To undo a revolution, something like a counter-revolution is required. Revolutions, to be sure, are never completely undone, and counter-revolutions never completely restore the status quo ante. Conserv-

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atives, unlike those properly called "reactionaries," are well aware of this. (And neoconservatives are even more acutely aware of it.) If they use the rhetoric of "revolution"—as in the "conservative revolution"—it is to highlight the gravity of the situation and the seriousness of their enterprise.

Moreover, it is not in the name of an abstract idea or ideology, not out of regard for doctrinal purity or some notion of an ideal society, that conservatives launch their own revolution (or counter-revolution). The "Contract with America" is not the Ten Commandments. It is a legislative program on the order of a party platform, containing specific, practical proposals for reform—proposals that can have large consequences in redefining and redirecting our social energies but that are by no means absolute or utopian.

Nor is the impulse behind this conservative revolution an obsessive ideological attachment to the free market, as some have claimed. This is the charge that has been brought against Margaret Thatcher in England and that was echoed here most recently by Alan Ehrenhalt in the *New York Times*. "Market worship," "the unfettered free market," "the tyranny of the market," "an uncontrolled and amoral free market"—Ehrenhalt's repetition of these phrases gives a hyperbolic tone to his argument. Can this describe a proposed reform of Medicare that will not privatize health care but merely reduce the increase of government funding from 10 to 6 percent a year; or a reform of welfare that will not eliminate public relief but transfer it to state governments; or a reform of education that will not abolish free public schools but provide vouchers to parents to be spent on schools of their choice; or a reform of taxation that will produce $11.2 trillion in seven years rather than the $11.4 trillion proposed by the Democrats? If these reforms deserve the label of revolution, it is because they do truly, significantly, change the *direction* of social policy. But they hardly change it in conformance with some mythical agenda devised by the "dogmatic marketeers" conjured up by Ehrenhalt.

Ehrenhalt concludes by accusing conservatives of not appreciating the true nature of our problem: "the moral, social, and cultural erosion of the past quarter-century in American life." That erosion, he tells us, can be corrected only by restoring "community" and "civil society." But this, of course, is precisely what conservatives had been saying long before liberals belatedly acknowledged these moral, social, and cultural problems (remember "the economy, stupid")—and long, long before liberals discovered the virtues of community and civil society. And it is precisely because conservatives ("cultural" or "social" conservatives, as they have been called) take these problems seriously that they seek to undo the policies that have helped undermine individual, familial, and communal responsibilities. It is ironic to find liberals mouthing the mantras of "community" and "civil society" while refusing to make those reforms (in welfare, most notably) that would restore a truly viable community and civil society.

It is in such a situation that a conservative, a conservative by "disposition," may be tempted to give two cheers for a conservative revolution. Two, not three, because a conservative is a reluctant revolutionist. And two, not one or none, because there comes, unhappily, a time when even a conservative has to be a revolutionist. ♦

CULTURAL DISCONNECT

By Scott M. Morris

Misunderstanding is afoot in America. People are talking, which is good, but they are not understanding each other, which is bad. There is a significant divide in American culture, a divide between a certain variety of intellectual and, not to put too fine a point on it, the rest of the country. This variety of intellectual stands on his side of the divide, ear cupped and heart full of good intentions, but cannot make sense of what he hears coming from the hinterlands. He looks over, studies the dark terrain, grows confused, draws the wrong conclusions, and generally has a bad time of it—whether he is aware of the fact or not.

The split is not between intellectuals and non-intellectuals—it is not between bookish scholars and virile factory workers, or, for instance, between a

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Neil Shigley

yacht-bound William F. Buckley, Jr. and a beer-drinking longshoreman. The divide is between people who have been socialized and educated in a secular culture in a way that has sealed them off from religion, and people who are either religious or at least familiar with the language and motivations of religious people.

A person of the latter persuasion may be decidedly secular in his take on life, but he will know what it means to believe things are otherwise. The person who is to some extent lost in a secular culture, on the other hand, is not really sure what religious people are up to. Because his life has been conditioned by a secular worldview, all convincing explanations of the mysteries of existence are necessarily secular ones. As an educated person, he may know something about religion, but, for the most part, his knowledge is strictly historical or literary—it is parlor knowledge, brittle and dry as dead men's bones.

If he has been exposed to religious thinking at all, it was in a college course in which he read a few pages of Aquinas or some stanzas of Dante. He will not believe there is a modern-day Aquinas. He will not think it possible for a contemporary artist to be as devout as Dante. He would never suspect that a scientist in the late 20th century could reverently dabble in theology in the way that Newton did. He might have been exposed to T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* but would be shocked to discover his *Christianity and Culture*.

This brand of secularism is noteworthy for its insularity. And in its ignorance of the most enduring tradition in Western culture, such secular insularity has had a profoundly negative impact on our common American conversation. Observe, for instance, what happens when someone utters the word "sin" in mixed company. To secularly tuned ears, the word sin stems from an antiquated religious tradition that retains historical and sociological importance at best. This tradition no longer carries contemporary weight. Its symbols and words are recognizable, but those words and symbols are stripped of original content, dressed up in the latest fashion, and denatured. When someone says, "sin," secularly tuned ears do the best they can and produce, "dysfunction."

But while sins must be prayed about and forgiven, dysfunctions must be refunctionalized. Sins require priests and preachers; dysfunctions require politicians and perhaps psychologists. Thinking that a person is really talking about a dysfunction when she uses the word sin does violence to the meaning of the word sin and to what religious people mean when they use the word sin, but it is not necessarily an act of deliberate intellectual aggression. It may be a sign of confusion. It may reveal a type of parochialism that masquerades as cosmopolitanism.

And when the confusion becomes acute, it is difficult to ignore. When someone is bold enough to insist that sin is sin and not anything else, when someone is blunt about it, people conditioned by secular insularity eventually go dumb and stare; their jaws agape, their eyes agoggle, a peculiar dysphasia sets in on them

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like a terrible hangover. There, in all its attendant ugliness, is a phenomenon that might be called Cultural Disconnect.

Cultural Disconnect may be defined as a phenomenon that occurs when people begin to talk past each other because they have been formed, and informed, by different cultures and are not fully aware of the fact. For long, painful moments, people who have been Culturally Disconnected continue to make points and ripostes in what they take to be a shared language, when, after all, they have ascribed different meanings to words belonging to a common vocabulary.

In recent years, Cultural Disconnect has been occurring more and more frequently between those who suffer from secular insularity and those who do not. It occurs on talk shows, news shows, during the course of debates, in polemics waged by usually crafty and sensible cultural observers, at swank cocktail parties, and even in the academy, a place where, as everyone knows, people take it as imperative to understand one another.

It is not that the number of people who suffer from secular insularity is so great, it is that they are conspicuous: They seem to always be on television. When they are not on television, they are writing books or, at the very least, articles, editorials, and newspaper reports. And because they hold positions of great visibility, their analysis of life creates a mystifying national spectacle in which they portray the convictions that are fundamental and familiar to Americans on the other side of the cultural divide as if they were artifacts from another time and place. In movies, television shows, and news broadcasts, Americans see people who resemble themselves to some extent but are strangely bereft of the convictions that in real life are found to be sustaining. They read columns and articles, they read books, and again, there they are—except, no, on second glance, there they are not.

It is as if a nation of body doubles is getting all the attention. People who look like Americans, and for the most part act and think like Americans, are being paraded as the real thing. But the telltale clue is there—the people who are getting the airtime and the print space are not very often religious people, while Americans are, more often than not, religious.

A July 8, 1995, *Economist* article finds America to be a country that "oozes religion," in fact. The article cites polls which suggest that around 95 percent of Americans believe in God, that four out of five believe in miracles, the afterlife, and the Virgin Birth. Nearly three-quarters of Americans believe in angels. Nine out of ten own a Bible. Twenty-seven percent own more than four copies. "Belief in the devil has risen sharply, to 65 percent in a recent poll," the piece continues. That this is not consistently reflected in the American media is unfortunate and curious and maybe absurd—and points to the phenomenon of Cultural Disconnect.

Some beleaguered believers feel so harassed by the funhouse-mirror treatment they receive in newspapers and on television that they posit the existence of a cabal of God-hating intellectuals, a conspiracy of media-savvy secularists, who are out to deprive the nation of its religious life. But there is no such conspiracy, and the intellectuals, journalists, and media and entertainment producers are far from being savvy. They are, in fact, weirdly confused and disjointed. They are severely handicapped, in terms of their ability to understand America. They have eyes, but they cannot see. They have ears, but they cannot hear. American life appears to them as a bizarre pageant where people succumb to inexplicable motivations. National trends baffle them. The cultural zeitgeist forever eludes them.

Mega-churches sprout up across the country just when religion is supposed to be on the wane. Mainstream Protestant denominations evolve nicely and appeal to principles that even they, mired in their secular vision, can applaud, but what happens? Those denominations begin to lose members, and a more robust, evangelical Protestantism begins to dominate the religious landscape. Racism is said to be the great American plague, and Christian fundamentalism is identified as a backward, crudely religious and racist example of what is going wrong, and yet, the explosive growth of Pentecostal churches, the fastest growing branch of Christianity today, utterly defies this paradigm—Pentecostal churches are typically the most racially integrated in the country.

There have been attempts to bridge the gap, of course. Most of the major networks have attempted to cover the religious nature of the nation and re-connect with Americans. There have been special reports and special editions, in-depth reporting and long, earnest articles, but they only reveal the Disconnect all the more.

A compelling example of this variety of Cultural Disconnect was provided by a summer segment of the venerable *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* (now *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*), that nightly refiner's fire where corrupt half-thoughts and misstatements, where media-hype tactics and pressures, are burned clean. If the *NewsHour* cannot strike a balanced note, there is something wrong in our culture. And that was what was revealed during the August 21 broadcast, featuring a misunderstanding concerning the Promise Keepers,

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the grass-roots religious organization for men founded by Bill McCartney.

McCartney, formerly head football coach at the University of Colorado, formed the Promise Keepers in 1990. While he had been a formidable coach, he was, he explains, a poor father and husband and almost lost his family. He knew his failings were not unique and believed a group that bluntly addressed the nation's problems as spiritual problems, and not economic or even moral problems, would provide an answer for men across the country. McCartney believes the only way that lasting change can come about is for individuals to submit themselves to God. There aren't 12 steps. There is one, and only one—to go God's way, or the wrong way.

Richard Ostling, *Time* magazine's religion editor, served as the narrator of the segment. Before the interviews commenced, footage of Promise Keepers gatherings was shown—men raising their hands, praising God, singing. Following the footage, Marie Fortune, a domestic violence counselor and minister, and Robert Bly, author of the bestselling men's book *Iron John*, were asked to comment on the Promise Keepers. While Fortune clearly understood what the Promise Keepers were up to—and disagreed with them on explicitly religious grounds—Bly seemed lost. It was not that he disagreed with the Promise Keepers agenda—though he did—it was that he seemed utterly perplexed by it, not to mention alarmed.

Though Bly was described by Ostling as a "liberal Protestant," it appeared he had never before encountered people who act from religious motives. He suggested that the Promise Keepers had been founded in fear, that it would be bad for America in the long run, that it would ultimately be . . . *a political movement.* "This group of enthusiastic men is bound to go politically toward the Christian right wing. There's no other place it can go in American culture. . . . Pat Robertson is waiting."

McCartney put it this way: "We have no political agenda. We have no candidates to endorse. We have no policies to suggest. We're strictly after God's heart for what He would do to rescue our nation from this downward spiral of morality and restore Jesus Christ to his rightful position as the head of every home."

But such words, from Bly's perspective, were code words, and he was crafty enough to decode them. He reacted to McCartney's explanations as if they were a child's explanations, just waiting for the author of *Iron John* to come along and peel away the playground rhetoric to expose the naked political truth.

Implicit in Bly's take on the matter is the view that politics, and not anything else, is bedrock. That means that solutions to problems must be political. Thus McCartney, formerly an eminently capable football coach, drops the ball when he diagnoses his own problems and America's problems as the result of sin, for which the only cure is redemption, not political action.

To take another example, in the November issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Harvard theologian Harvey Cox wrote a fine article on the religious right in which he attempted, with some success, to cross the divide. While Professor Cox and the men and women he interviewed at Pat Robertson's Regent University did not suffer from Cultural Disconnect, Cox clearly sensed that some *Atlantic Monthly* readers might, and so the article reads like an ethnographer's travel journal, in which the natives' habits and beliefs are explored and then translated into political terms, which is to say, terms his readers will understand. Cox casts himself as the experienced traveler, trying to convince his readers that the natives at Regent University are people too. The professors who teach there hold advanced degrees from respectable universities, he explains. The students are actually quite bright, he allows. Everyone eats, sleeps, and drinks water to stay alive, just like people back home.

Manifesting scholarly prudence, Cox here and there expresses reservations: "I was still not sure whether Regent was a cause or a college or a little of both." (Of course, there are some who are unsure about Harvard for precisely the same reasons.) But in the end, Cox pointedly explains that those who are "enchanted by deconstruction, postmodernism, and secular philosophies" will find it hard "to engage people like the Regent faculty members." In order to do so, he explains, communication will have to proceed at "the theological level."

That communication will not come easily, but it must come. Cultural Disconnect may be amusing when it occurs during the course of a dinner party, but it is massively destructive when it disrupts national debate and fogs a nation's identity. It is not necessary that everyone agree with everyone else about politics and religion, but even the possibility of genuine disagreement implies some degree of understanding. As long as the evening news, and the magazines of opinion, and sitcoms, and feature films, continue to misunderstand the motives and ideas of Americans of faith, they will be responsible for the detachment and suspicion with which Americans increasingly view our common culture. ♦

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'Calvin and Hobbes' and the Moral Sense: A Farewell

By James Q. Wilson

Were you a newspaper editor, imagine your reaction if a cartoonist came to you and proposed a comic strip that would offer the reader moral instruction conveyed by the antics of a self-centered six-year-old boy whom only saintly parents could love and no other child could tolerate. The strip would have no running story line, would contain few if any jokes, and would from time to time be devoted to ruminations on the meaning of life. And, oh yes, the boy would talk to a stuffed tiger.

Whatever editor signed up Bill Watterson despite this rather unpromising scenario deserves the heartfelt thanks of all of us who have for years regarded reading "Calvin and Hobbes" as the necessary beginning of every day. Watterson has decided to bring his comic strip to a close at the end of December. So now we are to lose the boy, the tiger, and our only popular explication of the moral philosophy of Aristotle.

Whether they know it or not, most people are intuitive Aristotelians. They know that character is important, that it is formed by the routine activities of family and village life, and that having a good character is in the long run the only route to such happiness as people can achieve through their own efforts. Many people are, of course, more than Aristotelians; they are also Christians, Jews, Muslims, Mormons, or whatever, but though faith often adds much to this ancient view, it rarely subtracts much.

James Q. Wilson is the author, most recently, of The Moral Sense *(The Free Press).*

The irony of the names of the main characters suggests that they cannot have been chosen by accident. The mischievous, self-indulgent boy is named after the stern Protestant theologian of Geneva, John Calvin; the fun-loving but sensible tiger is named after the relentlessly utilitarian British philosopher Thomas Hobbes. But it is the boy, Calvin, who exemplifies in most of his life the consequences of embracing the pure hedonistic calculus: He is an engine of self-interest without the interior governor supplied by a long time horizon.

While sailing down a steep hill on an unsteerable sled, Calvin remarks: "I hate waiting for things. I like to have everything immediately." Hobbes, noticing that they are about to plunge off the edge of a cliff, wonders whether they at least ought to anticipate the death that now seems inevitable. "I don't know why I bother trying to have a little discussion with you," Calvin responds. "You are always so morbid."

Sometimes Calvin plans, but only with great effort. To be able to send away for a beanie with a propeller on top, he must first eat four boxes of Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs to get the proof-of-purchase seals. This he (barely) manages, and then only at the price of tremors induced by hyperglycemia. But waiting *six weeks* for the beanie to arrive induces near-hysteria.

His father frequently tells Calvin that waiting—like camping, living in a cool house, shoveling snow, being bitten by bugs—builds character. "Last year you said diarrhea builds character," the boys mutters, and wonders whether building character might actually kill him.

Occasionally Calvin ponders what character may mean. As Christmas approaches, he knows he must be good for Santa Claus to deliver the countless presents (including a heat-seeking guided missile) that he covets. But, he wonders aloud, can he be thought truly good if he is good only to get the presents? "I mean, really, all I'm doing is saying that I can be bribed. Is that good enough, or do I have to be good in my heart and spirit?" But this brief insight quickly vanishes: "OK," he asks of Hobbes, "so exactly how good do you think I have to act?"

What Calvin most wants, other than to destroy Susie Derkins with a snowball, is not character but fame. "I am destined for greatness," he tells Hobbes. "Calvin the Great, they'll call me." He achieves fame in his fantasy life as either Stupendous Man or Spaceman Spiff, but in his real life he does absolutely nothing that would earn him fame. He is a very bright six-year-old with a vast knowledge of dinosaurs, but school is not about stegosauruses or brontosauruses; it is about spelling and arithmetic. Through sheer indolence and an utterly unrealistic belief that other people can readily be induced to do his work for him or easily fooled by work that is not relevant to the topic, Calvin can rarely do better than a D-minus-minus.

How, then, to win fame in this world? The answer, of course, is to be on television. "I think life

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should be more like TV," he says to Hobbes. "All of life's problems ought to be solved within 30 minutes with simple homilies." In that world, "All our desires should be instantly gratified. Women should always wear tight clothes, and men should carry powerful handguns." Then, after a pause, he becomes aware of a dilemma: "If life was really like that, what would we watch on TV?"

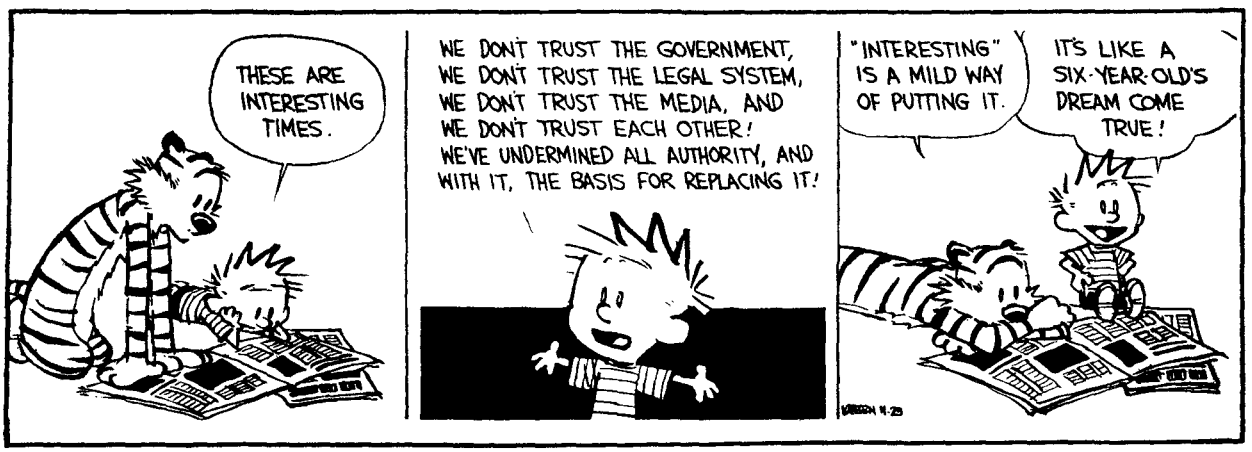
The puzzlement is only momentary, however, as Calvin endlessly watches television and daydreams about getting the big break that would put him on the screen. The "big break" usually turns out to be something such as spotting the first robin of the spring or inventing a Transmogrifier in the form of an empty cardboard box. "I don't need an education," he explains to Hobbes. Hobbes, characteristically prudent, asks how Calvin will make it in the world bereft of knowledge and skills. "I'll go on talk shows and hype myself," the boy replies. "Television validates life." Besides, "if something is so complicated that you can't explain it in 10 seconds, then it's probably not worth knowing anyway."

When his absurd ambitions come to nothing, or his school grades remain low, Calvin's defense is rationalization. He may be the most skilled rationalizer to appear in print since Ring Lardner's Alibi Ike. Everything is somebody else's fault. But sometimes the "somebody" has an identity that implies there may be more to Calvin than he lets on. After finally smacking Susie with a snowball "right in the kisser," he realizes that Susie or her mom will be in touch with Calvin's mother. He prepares her: "Bad news, Mom. I promised my soul to the devil this afternoon." "Oh?" she responds. "That recently?"

Being a calculating, rationalizing Economic Boy, Calvin naturally takes the dimmest view of how the world is organized. It is filled with people just like Calvin, all out for themselves. He observes to Hobbes that we don't trust the government, the media, the legal system, or each other. And then cheerfully adds, "It's like a six-year-old's dream come true."

Indeed. If the world is filled only with duplicates of Calvin, then it corresponds exactly to the moral sense of a six-year-old who is having a temper tantrum. The difficulty with maintaining this view is having to live with its inevitable consequences. On a walk in the woods, Calvin tells Hobbes that he doesn't believe in ethics anymore; as far as he is concerned, "the ends justify the means." Get what you can while the getting is good; "might makes right." Hobbes promptly pushes Calvin into a mud hole. "Why'd you do that?" Calvin protests. "You were in my way," Hobbes replies. "Now you're not. The ends justify the means." A brief moment of partial enlightenment touches Calvin, but of course he manages to reconcile it with self-interest in an utterly implausible way: "I didn't mean for *everyone*, you dolt. Just *me*."

Since Calvin's social life is confined to his parents and Hobbes, it is easy to see how he might fail to grasp the principle that one cannot easily claim the protection of a moral rule for oneself without granting it to others. If he played marbles with Susie instead of trying to hit her or "gross her out" with ghastly descriptions of the worm intestines in his school lunch, he would have to accommodate her views at least enough to keep the game going, and by doing that might learn that the rules of marbles (for example, taking turns, not cheating) have general applicability to life. But it would be an uphill struggle: He even treats his parents, most of the time, as the means to his immediate end. A Mother's Day greeting to his long-suffering mom contains the blunt acknowledgment that she is getting a hand-made card because he would rather spend the money on himself, an obvious hint that his allowance be increased, and a forth-



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right suggestion that she get up and make his breakfast. Never mind that no real six-year-old would ever write such a card; Calvin is the distillation of the self-centered instincts that people have, without the fig-leaf of make-believe affection.

But Calvin does face a few others who can help him acquire the recognition that his well-being depends to some degree on the existence of a moral order. There is Moe, the schoolyard bully, who extorts Calvin's lunch money with supreme indifference to any rules of fair play, and Rosalyn, the dreaded babysitter, who, though often defeated in her efforts to maintain a semblance of order, usually wins in the final inning.

One of Calvin's "scientific" experiments almost confronts him with the reality of his social nature. He builds a Duplicator that turns out five more Calvins who the real Calvin thinks can be used to do his homework, go to school, and clean up his room while he loafs. But he soon discovers that, since they are his moral as well as physical doubles, all they really do is get him in trouble at five times the rate he got in trouble by himself.

"I'm being framed by my own doubles," Calvin complains. "The worst part is that I don't even have the fun of doing the stuff I'm getting blamed for."

His attempt to change this is met by the perfectly reasonable response of his amoral doubles: "Let's put it to a vote." Democracy is a good political system, but it presupposes some moral convictions.

There is one part of his life that is beyond mere self-interest or quick calculation: Hobbes. Though the tiger greets Calvin with ferocious leaps that nearly bury the boy in the lawn, though Calvin and Hobbes fight over the silliest disagreements, Hobbes has a nature that compels Calvin's affection. The presocial Calvin learns something from the nonhuman Hobbes because Hobbes is warm, furry, loyal, understanding. The tiger is everything six-year-olds are not. Calvin's essential humanity is aroused by being with his tiger.

The saddest episodes in the short life of the comic strip were when the house was burgled and for a few desperate hours Calvin thought Hobbes had been stolen. Their reunion was genuinely touching, as were the many times when they played Calvin Ball or lay in front of a warm fire nestled against each other.

Why have so many people found Calvin to be so amusing and absorbing? Because, I suspect, there is a part of our minds—a part Adam Smith called the Impartial Spectator—that examines our lives. Its inspection reveals in each of us a six-year-old struggling to assert itself. It wins the struggle when we give way to excessive greed, intemperate rage, or preening self-adulation. And with our immense capacities for rationalization, we can justify this with the same excuses Calvin uses—"everybody does it" or "I am entitled to it." Only in our calmer, more reflective moments do we listen to the inner voice of reproach. For many of us, there is no calmer moment than that afforded by a quiet breakfast and no better perspective than that supplied by the antics of a little boy and his tiger.

Thank you, Calvin; thank you, Hobbes; thank you, Bill Watterson. ♦

Books

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

By Donna Rifkind

It seems quaint now, but there was a time, during the middle 1950s and after, when critics spent a lot of their energy arguing over what was specifically "Jewish" about the Jewish writers who were beginning to dominate the American literary scene. That decade witnessed an explosion of fiction by these writers, heralded by the appearance of Saul Bellow's translation from the Yiddish of Isaac Bashevis Singer's story "Gimpel the Fool" in *Partisan Review* in 1953. That same year, Bellow's novel *The Adventures of Augie March* was published, followed by Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant* (1957) and story collection *The Magic Barrel* (1958); Philip Roth's first book, *Goodbye, Columbus*, and Norman Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself*, both in 1959; and scores of books by other writers of the period, fiction and non-fiction alike.

From that time onward, the magic barrel of works by American Jewish writers was inexhaustible, it seemed, as was its wide and growing audience. So why did the critic Philip Rahv call their Jewishness "a very elusive quality and rather difficult to define" in his introduction to *A Malamud Reader*? The answer: because for the most part the books, whose subjects varied widely—from coming of age to poverty and success, sex, politics, belonging, and alienation—had almost nothing at all to do with Judaism as a religion. There are exceptions, of course, notably the sentimental novels of Chaim Potok; but gener-

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ally speaking, in four lively decades of Jewish-American literature, one would have to look hard to find a significant body of fictional work that bothers with the question of religious faith in any serious way.

How interesting, then, to discover during the current publishing season three novels by Jewish women, all preoccupied in different ways with those very religious questions that have gone more or less unexplored by American Jewish writers over the past 40 years. Each book wrestles with ideas about belief, and—because Jews tend to apprehend their religion less through individual revelations of faith than through the mutual commitment of a like-minded group—each presents those ideas within the framework of three very different religious communities.

Pearl Abraham's first novel, *The Romance Reader* (Riverhead Books, 296 pages, $21.95), offers a look at Chasidic life through the eyes of a young girl, Rachel Benjamin, the oldest of a rabbi's seven children growing up in a bungalow colony in upstate New York. This book has been getting a good deal of attention, with most reviewers succumbing to a nearly irresistible urge to see it as a peep show, a theme-park tour, the movie *Witness* set among Chasidic Jews. This gawking approach unjustly telescopes a novel full of subtle complexities.

While there is plenty of material in *The Romance Reader* emphasizing the insularity and strangeness of Chasidic life ("Ma shaves her head every month. . . . I once saw her bald head on a pillow; her kerchief had slipped off. It was a ball, round and white, something you kick around on a playground"), there are as many ways in which it resembles other contemporary young-women-coming-of-age novels: The daughter's clear-eyed perspective as she describes her family during a period of crisis brings to mind Susan Minot's *Monkeys*, for example, or, more recently, Lisa Shea's *Hula*. The difference is that the source of the family crisis is not alcoholism or Vietnam, as it was in those books, but a father's religious idealism—Rabbi Benjamin, Rachel's father, harbors far-fetched dreams of building a synagogue and learning center in their dwindling little community—at odds with a mother's practical anxieties about money and isolation:

> Ma goes to her room and the house becomes quiet, so quiet I hear her screams over and over in my head. Everyone walks around on tiptoe, whispering, as if to make up for the screaming. I help Sarah lay out her clothes for school tomorrow, listen to her read a page in her reader. . . . No one says anything, but we're all thinking what if Father doesn't keep his promise. We've heard this before, Ma threatening to leave, to take only the baby and go live in Israel. But what if this time it's for real, if this time she means it and Father doesn't know, if this time we'll come home and find her swinging, her mouth open and her tongue hanging out.

As for Rachel herself, many reviews have characterized her merely as a rebel, courageously battling the cruel limitations imposed on her by Chasidism. But this is far from the whole story. Yes, she reads forbidden romance novels in English, in defiance of her father, who wants her to read only Yiddish books; yes, she insists on wearing sheer pantyhose instead of modest opaque tights, and an uncovered bathing suit while she works as a lifeguard; and yes, at novel's end, she escapes an arranged marriage and faces an unknown future. At the same time, though, there are many occasions in which Rachel seeks acceptance within the boundaries of her community. She feels acutely ashamed after eating pretzels on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when she ought to have been fasting; and, after initially refusing to let her mother shave her head the day after her wedding, she gives in and does the job herself.

In truth, Rachel is an intelligent questioner rather than a rebel, struggling to find her position on the long ladder of faith. She feels the full sting of her father's rebuke when, after one of their arguments about bathing suits, he starts to recite "Aishes Chayil," the poem from Proverbs enumerating the virtues of a woman of valor. And she mourns her departure from her family, her community, and its way of life at the novel's end: "I watch Ma light candles, and a spreading glowing pain is in my chest. Father's kiddish hurts. I love them and I don't. I know this is what I'll miss when I go: the children at the table, Ma lighting candles, Father's kiddish." It's this painful litany, this nostalgia (literal meaning: "pain for home"), this bitter knowledge that religious return, or *teshuvah*, has at this moment become impossible for her, that lingers, far longer than any of Rachel's acts of defiance.

Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* (Viking, 357 pages, $23.95) wrestles more with nostalgia than with belief, and the outcome is not a happy one. While Goldstein has written effectively about questions of Jewish faith in the past (most notably in her short story "Rabbinical Eyes"), in her novels one has the impression that she is delicately evading her true subject. 1983's *The Mind-Body Problem*, her best-known book, obscured ideas about belief and doubt in a cloud of tiresome philosophical debates between a Princeton graduate student raised in an Orthodox Jewish household and her husband, a famous mathematical genius. *Mazel* buries the same issues under an avalanche of sentimentality, as the author attempts a portrait of shtetl and city life in Galicia and Warsaw

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among Jews in the early part of the century.

The shtetl of Goldstein's imagination, called Shluftchev on the Puddle, is a dear little place, full of gypsies and dybbuks and folk songs sung by simple, God-fearing folk, all of it as prettily sterile and inert as a snow globe. Goldstein, an unreconstructed academic (she once taught philosophy at Barnard), includes here an extended lecture on the Jewish calendar year and a thorough description of each holiday's ritual observances. And she gives us, through the eyes of her girl-heroine Sorel Sonnenberg, a mawkishly tragic drowning-suicide of Sorel's ethereal sister, Fraydel. Sorel, herself possessed of an unearthly beauty (all heroines in a Goldstein novel are brilliantly good-looking), is haunted by Fraydel's death long after she leaves Shluftchev, with its "atmosphere made unbreathable by piety and ritual," for glittering Warsaw, where "there were so many ideas in the air you could get an education simply by breathing deeply." In Warsaw Sorel discovers a prodigious talent for acting, joins an avant-garde Yiddish theater troupe, and enjoys a reincarnation as the glamorous Sasha, with a dish of blintzes named after her at the intellectual Cafe Pripetshok.

Propping up both ends of this mountain of marzipan, at the beginning and at the end of the novel, is an abbreviated but much more interesting story. Sasha's granddaughter Phoebe, a Princeton mathematician who studies the geometry of soap bubbles, has decided after an atheistic American upbringing—her mother, Sasha's daughter Chloe, is a professor of classics at Columbia—to become a religious Jew. Blissfully married and pregnant, Phoebe lives in an Orthodox enclave in suburban New Jersey, to the great consternation of her grandmother, the shtetl-fleeing Sasha.

Here, in the conflict between Sasha's abhorrence of what she calls the "reshtetlization of America" and Phoebe's grateful return to a community devoted to traditional belief and ritual, is a story worth telling, though we only get a little piece of it. The novel ends with a vignette from Phoebe's wedding at the Sheraton Meadowlands, as Sasha is pulled into a wild circle dance among the women on their side of the *mechitzah*, or partition, while from the other side she hears the men's voices reciting "Aishes Chayil" (the same song in praise of the woman of valor that Rachel Benjamin's father used to scold her in *The Romance Reader*). Goldstein makes disappointing use of this provocative scene, reducing the significance of Phoebe's *teshuvah*, her joyous return to a welcoming group of like-minded Orthodox believers, to *mazel*, or mere chance. In the author's mind, faith is not a ladder but a flagpole; one is compelled either to sit atop it or to jump off, the compulsion springing not from introspection, study, or ideology but from pure whimsy.

Kevin Chadwick

Tova Reich's third novel, on the other hand, plunges directly into the philosophical depths that Goldstein's book so gingerly sidesteps. Set among Israel's occupied territories, near the holy Jewish tombs in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron—a stone's throw from the place where Jacob dreamed of the ladder from heaven with its angels ascending and descending—*The Jewish War* (Pantheon, 270 pages, $22) has the same antic energy of Reich's last novel, *Master of the Return*, and a few of the same characters. Yet more here than in the previous book, under the veneer of its slapstick pace and often hilarious satire there is dead seriousness.

Reich's theme is the misuse of religious conviction, the "totalitarianism of holiness," as practiced by a messianic group of mostly American-born Israeli settlers in the hotly contested West Bank territory of Hebron. The group's leader, Yehudi HaGoel (born Jerry Goldberg in New York), takes a morning off of work as a tour guide to anoint himself King of Judea and Samaria. Emunah HaLevi (previously Faith Fleischman from Flatbush) gives birth

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to her ninth child on a morning visit to her Arab herbalist, then leaves with the swaddled baby "like a well-wrapped package that she had purchased that day on a shopping spree in the marketplace." Elkanah Ben-Canaan, from Galveston, Texas, "Eddie Cohen he had been called in those days," found his life's meaning "when he picked up the novel *Exodus* in an airport lounge." Malkie Seltzer leaves her husband and five children to become the third wife and loyal follower of Yehudi HaGoel.

It's not hard to see these creatures as Reich wants us to see them: first as rather lovable kooks and then, increasingly, as serious subversives whose crimes include kidnapping, grave-robbing, polygamy, terrorism, illegal squatting on disputed land, transmitting stolen explosives, and attempted murder. Yehudi, who sneaked aboard an airplane in the hijacked coffin of a dead rabbi in order to make *aliyah* to Israel during the Six-Day War, sees himself as "God's pet" and will stop at nothing to carry out his perceived mission "to settle, to wage war, to conquer, to intervene actively to further the redemption and bring about the fullness of the messianic era."

I won't give away the novel's ending, except to say that the zealots' regular invocations of the Holocaust, Jonestown, and Masada throughout the book are far from accidental.

Set in "the last half of the final decade of the second millennium of the common era," *The Jewish War* has been released at a particularly eerie moment. Much of the novel seems prescient, from the unrepentant intolerance and "lethal mixture . . . of messianic religious zeal and rabid nationalism" of its zealots to the ripped-from-the-editorial-page thoughts of General Uri Lapidot, the army commander summoned to face down HaGoel's fanatics. He muses:

> While he believed in principle that Jews should be free to dwell openly in any portion of the biblical homeland, Lapidot nevertheless supported the government's decision to call a halt to further intrusions into the territories. . . . The State of Israel could not survive alone in a hostile world, bereft of the support and goodwill of its mighty American patron, and peace, after all, was not a prize to be spurned, even the cold, niggardly, ungenerous peace that was being held out like a miserable stick for a well-trained, well-beaten old dog to fetch.

Lapidot goes on to express revulsion at the sight of the ultra-Orthodox, "when one of their unhealthy-looking, black-suited, black-hatted, fringe-garmented young men with rosy blotches on their doughy-white cheeks . . . passed him by on the street." This point of view is creepily reminiscent of a review of *The Romance Reader*, by Lore Dickstein, in a recent issue of *The New York Times Book Review*, where she declared that the sight of the Chasidic world represented in the novel is "both voyeuristically intriguing and, to this feminist's sensibility, repellent."

Repellent? The ways in which the world's oldest faith is surviving in an age of assimilation is one of the great stories of our time. It was not an issue for the older cohort of American Jewish writers, who must have imagined that the Jewish future would be a wide, smooth sea of assimilation in which Jewishness could be equated with the language of Yiddish and the embarrassingly backward habits of parents and grandparents.

For these mostly male writers, the religion of their fathers was fast becoming a memory, and was being replaced by the religions of art, socialism, Americanism, anti-Americanism. So it is, apparently, left to Jewish women to keep the faith in the secular literature of American Judaism. ♦

Movies

YOU'RE KILLING ME!

By Josh Larsen

In movie theaters across the country, audiences are increasingly being encouraged to laugh at things no sane person should find amusing—at the sight of extreme, graphic, bloody, sickening violence. The trend began almost 30 years ago when audiences saw *Bonnie and Clyde*, perhaps the first American movie to combine scenes of slapstick with other sequences that depict shocking brutality. This uneasy juxtaposition of two polar elements has since become a popular convention of the modern film from Schwarzenegger to Tarantino. Ask today's movie audience "What's so funny?" and it's far from unlikely they will regale you with an account of a scene in which someone was shot in the head.

When *Bonnie and Clyde* was released in 1967, its unapologetic violence caused an uproar. *Bonnie and Clyde* was an unsettling hybrid film: not a dramatic comedy or a romantic comedy—both of which audiences had come to expect—but a *violent comedy* that punctuated its wisecracks with bullet holes.

From the start of the film, Bon-

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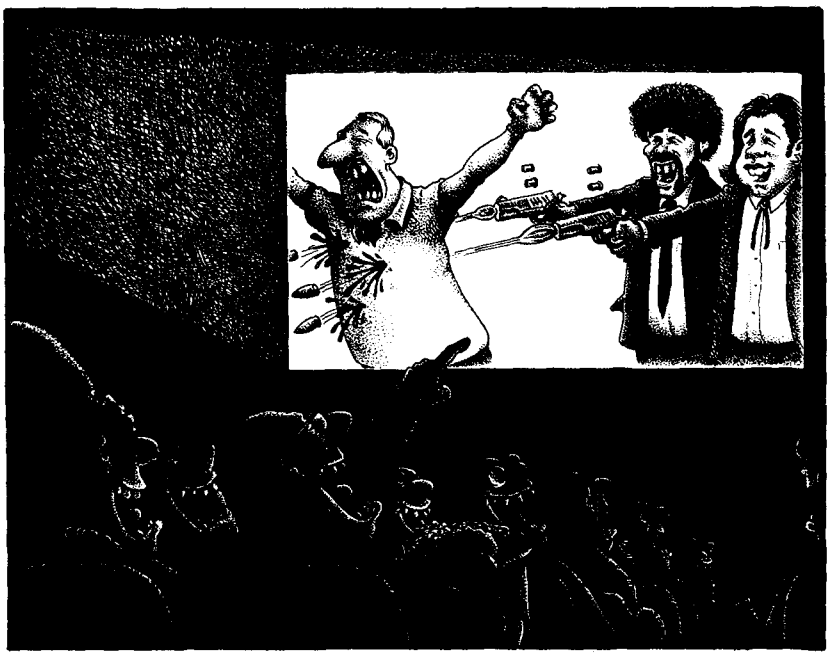

Sean Delonas

nie and Clyde (Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty) are portrayed as likable young characters with a fondness for mischievous fun. Their life of crime begins in comedy (the first bank they try to rob is out of funds) and their introduction to violence begins in ominous surprise (after being attacked by a grocery store owner he was sticking up, a bewildered Clyde exclaims, "He tried to kill me! Why'd he try to kill me? I didn't want to hurt him!").

When the violence is blown full scale, it comes during a comic moment, as Bonnie, Clyde, and their new partner C.W. (Michael J. Pollard) make an inept getaway. While we are still chuckling from C.W.'s disastrous parallel parking job, Clyde instinctively shoots a pursuer straight in the face. Just when we thought it was safe to laugh, the brutal violence of *Bonnie and Clyde* sinks in.

This juxtaposition of comedy and violence left audiences bewildered, wondering whether to let out an exasperated laugh or suck in a gasping sigh. As Pauline Kael wrote at the time, "*Bonnie and Clyde* keeps the audience in a kind of eager, nervous imbalance—holds our attention by throwing disbelief back in our faces. People in the audience at *Bonnie and Clyde* are laughing, demonstrating that they're not stooges—that they appreciate the joke—when they catch the first bullet right in the face."

Not knowing what to do in this state of nervous imbalance, the 1967 audiences either let out those uneasy laughs or protested in offended rage. Today, comedic violence is back on the screen, only now it serves a different purpose: rather than waste time moralizing over the violence they depict, these films instead use that brutality as the joke itself.

Writer-director Quentin Tarantino takes the violent comedy to a new level. When *Pulp Fiction* hit the scene in 1994, debate over the film's violence inevitably ensued. However, just as with *Bonnie and Clyde*, it was not so much the explicitness or number of violent acts in *Pulp Fiction* that disturbed audiences, but rather it was the casual, comedic attitude with which those acts were portrayed.

Like Bonnie and Clyde, *Pulp Fiction*'s heroes are crooks: likable, entertaining characters who just happen to shoot people in the face. One minute we are laughing at Vincent (John Travolta) and Jules (Samuel L. Jackson) as they argue over the sexual appropriateness of a foot massage, and the next we are gasping at their offhand execution of three young men. The unnerving combination of comedy and violence in *Bonnie and Clyde* once again covers the screen; the difference is that this time the audience finds it easier to laugh.

When Vincent accidentally shoots a business partner in the head, exploding blood and brains all over the back of Jules's car, the scene is played strictly for laughs. "Oh man," Travolta bemusedly reacts, "I shot Marvin in the face." The ensuing argument between Vincent and Jules is classic comedic banter, only this time they aren't arguing over foot massages. Watch this scene with anyone who is experiencing *Pulp Fiction* for the first time and the unsettling nature of violent comedy becomes clear—that same cringe/grin that audiences expressed during *Bonnie and Clyde* will creep across their face.

Tarantino's first feature, *Reservoir Dogs*, works within the same vein. After a botched jewelry heist, the surviving thieves hole up in a warehouse where paranoia and suspicion lead to a violent end. At one point, a gangster named Mr. Blonde (Michael Madsen) tortures and interrogates a captured cop by slicing off his ear. The scene, brutal to watch, is played with a comic edge as the thief dances sadistically around his prey to the tune of "Stuck in the Middle with You." Though the violence is agonizing, the comedy is mesmerizing—a troubling sort of relief valve that allows us to grin.

Yet to credit Tarantino alone for this pleasure audiences take in violent comedy would not be fair. In fact, one could easily argue that the association between things that

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make us laugh and things that make us wince has always been a part of film. From the often brutal slapstick of the Three Stooges (and to a lesser degree, of Buster Keaton) to the inane one-liners of Stallone and Schwarzenegger action films, the concept of comedic violence has always been around. True, we may not laugh when Arnold screams "Screw you!" while disposing of someone with a giant drill (*Total Recall,* 1990), but we can at least recognize a weird, Brechtian joke at work. The combination of violence and humor in *Bonnie and Clyde,* as well as that used by Tarantino, is something else again, something more than a physical gag or a one-liner.

Watching writer/director Robert Rodriguez's now-mythic $7,000 debut, *El Mariachi,* we laugh readily when Rodriguez's hapless mariachi has a letter opener thrust between his legs and is forced to sing for his life. Later, we laugh a bit more uneasily when he runs between two machine guns, causing the bad guys' bullets to chew up each other's faces.

With *Desperado,* a sequel/remake of *El Mariachi,* Rodriguez ups the ante higher still. In a shootout early on, an attacker leaps at the mariachi who lies helpless on the floor. Swinging two guns toward his foe, the mariachi pumps him full of rounds, and the force of the blasts causes a gravity-defying feat where the attacker flies straight up in the air.

On cue, the audience laughs. It may be a laugh of wonderment rather than humor, but it is still a laugh. And it is no longer that uneasy chuckle we offer when watching *Bonnie and Clyde.* When we laugh at that body flying through the air, it is the same laughter we give up when Gallagher smashes a watermelon or David Letterman destroys a TV. The violence is the comedy, the purveyors of violence are comedians, and the connection between the two is indissoluble.

Thirty years ago, the juxtaposition served a different purpose, as Kael said: "The whole point of *Bonnie and Clyde* is to rub our noses in [the violence], to make us pay our dues for laughing."

Back in 1967, those who laughed freely at *Bonnie and Clyde* were still exposed in the end, for the final frames of the film leave no doubt. When our heroes' bodies are riddled with bullets, and the camera makes us watch for a long, long time, no one laughs. And then those who have laughed throughout finally realize that the joke is on them.

But now the joke is on *Bonnie and Clyde.* The moral qualms audiences felt when they first chuckled at Bonnie and Clyde's clumsy getaway and then, a moment later, watched Clyde fire a bullet in an innocent man's face are beyond us now. The audience is now free to laugh whenever—and at whatever—it wants. Human brains all over the back seat of a car. A policeman tortured, his ear severed. Hilarious, no? ♦

Books

Real Men Don't Whine

By Michael Giltz

Finally, after waiting patiently in line behind women, blacks, gays, and countless others, men are pounding out the drumbeat of victimization. In his new book, *The Masculine Mystique: The Politics of Masculinity* (Ballantine, 320 pages, $23), Andrew Kimbrell offers a litany of male woe more sweeping than anything Betty Friedan came up with in her *Feminine Mystique*: Men were cut off from their natural role as nurturing caretakers by the Industrial Revolution, which brought an abrupt end to an idyllic time when people worked in communion with each other and rarely, if ever, sought personal gain. Now, men are beset on all sides by the ills of mechanized society.

Following in the footsteps of Warren Farrell, author of the similarly portentous *The Myth of Male Power,* Kimbrell suggests the troubles of men are accelerating at the end of the 20th century. There has been, he says, "a dramatic drop in real wages for the average working man, while that of women has increased." And if that's not bad enough, "Men face serious discrimination in the criminal justice system." Ninety-four percent of the people in jail are men, he says, even though women are charged with nearly 20 percent of all crimes. Never mind that he doesn't bother to discuss the differing sorts of crimes with which the sexes are generally charged; men are getting the shaft. And even those men who manage to stay out of jail face punishment—the punishment of a full-time job. Work is a very bad thing; Kimbrell describes it as a joyless, dulling affair, a "harness" of dehumanizing conditions. It leads to our becoming "robopaths," which he defines as "creatures of a society that worships mechanical efficiency, regularity, and predictability." We all suffer from robopathology to one degree or another, he warns. And small wonder: "Currently over

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75 percent of all jobs consist of repetitive motion and little else."

It soon becomes clear that Kimbrell's real target is our capitalist economy, a system plagued by competition. He condescendingly points to "primitive" societies as places where communities worked together. Cooperation was the watchword in cultures as diverse as "the American Indian, African, and pre-modern European societies."

Really? What about China and India, both of which had vast empires thousands of years ago, empires built through a level of competition that would make most corporate executives blanch? Or the Mayas, who were almost as warlike as the Aztecs? Kimbrell pays them no heed. Instead, he focuses on anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's famous 1922 study of the Trobriand people of the South Sea Islands. They made extensive use of elaborate gift-giving, which Kimbrell assumes is purely altruistic. Kimbrell seems either unaware of or unconcerned with the lengthy scholarly debate surrounding Malinowski's study. It's now abundantly clear that "gift-giving" was merely another version of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," that the islanders used it as a form of diplomacy to cement relationships and avoid conflict, even as other forms of trade took place away from the pomp and circumstance of the official ceremony. Kimbrell would have had better luck arguing that cooperation dominated in prehistoric times—and today—only in societies where people live in groups of 50 or fewer. But even there only the most romanticized anthropologist could ignore the many examples of competition—cases where the best hunter received the best share of the kill or people attempted to gain status in one way or another. But Kimbrell insists on believing that competitiveness and profiteering are modern inventions, whose roots he traces to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.

In a later bit of foolishness, Kimbrell decides to illustrate the totalitarian world of corporate America by examining the culture of General Electric. He fearfully describes Jack Welch, its CEO, as wielding "near-dictatorial power over millions of people." Kimbrell refers to Welch's "regime" as a time when more than 200,000 employees have been fired and says that Welch and other CEOs have "the power to dominate and coerce others into actions and behavior. Corporations are not democracies." Choosing GE as his prototypical Evil Empire is ironic since, as any business-school student would have told him, GE is the classic recent example of a corporation that abandoned its autocratic and stodgy ways and embraced teamwork and cooperation—the very attributes Kimbrell professes to admire.

He notes with puzzlement that GE has increased in value a whopping $67.6 billion since Welch took over, but seems to have no conception of what that means. Like most anti-business writers, he probably imagines it locked away in some musty vault. The truth is that the increase in value means an assured future for the 200,000 employees still working at GE (not to mention their families). It means more income for the tens of thousands of private individuals who bought stock in the company either directly or through a mutual fund. It also means increased stability for the many pension funds that placed their trust in GE and had that trust rewarded.

In the end, Kimbrell makes only a few modest requests when he isn't talking about "a near-constant confrontation with current economic and social structures."

Men should spend more time with their children and mentor fatherless boys in their community. Men should practice preventive medicine and discourage teens from taking steroids. Men should push for reform of divorce proceedings, where custody of children is heavily weighted towards women. But there is one economic doozy at the center of his platform: a 30-hour work week, which he blithely states would "drastically cut unemployment." And don't worry about losing any income—that would be maintained through tax incentives for employers and some unnamed "other devices."

It takes a real man to make such a claim. But not a real bright man. ♦

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Former senator Bob Packwood plans to open a political consulting business on Capitol Hill. . . . Despite the fall from office, Packwood does not rule out a future political career. "When people say, 'How can you make a recovery?' I cite Marion Barry, who went from mayor to prison to mayor again," he said. For now, however, Packwood will extend his political and decision-making expertise to clients: "I'm going to give them advice based on a quarter-century of experience in how this place operates."

—*Washington Post*, Dec. 2, 1995

Parody

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